AUTHENTICATION SYSTEM AND METHOD

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a process for performing an identity verification based on a system of challenges and responses, e.g. from a physically unclonable function (PUF).

BACKGROUND

A physically unclonable function (PUF) is a term of art referring to a function comprising a deterministic but unpredictable physical phenomenon. A PUF is also sometimes referred to as a physical random function. A PUF receives an input, referred to as a "challenge", and generates an output, referred to as the corresponding "response", in dependence on the challenge and the physical phenomenon employed by the PUF. PUFs are sometimes classified into strong and weak PUFs. A strong PUF is capable of generating a respective response for a large number of different challenges, typically being able to take any arbitrary value of the challenge. A weak PUF can generate a response for only a single response or a small number of responses (typically the challenge cannot take any arbitrary value). In other words, a strong PUF has a large number of challenge-response pairs (it has a large challenge-response space), whilst a weak PUF has a single challenge-response pair or limited number of challenge-response pairs (a small or limited challenge-response space). According to one definition, a weak PUF has a number of responses linear in the number of challenge bits, or more generally one that does not grow more than linearly in other parameters.

A known example of a strong PUF is an optical PUF. For instance, an optical PUF may comprise a laser, an optical sensor, and a solid optical medium with bubbles or other such artefacts set in the medium. The laser is shone through the optical medium at a controllable angle to create a diffraction or scattering pattern (which is an effect of the bubbles or artefacts in the medium). The sensor is arranged to sense this pattern. The challenge is the angle of the laser, and the response is generated based on the sensed pattern.

An example of a weak PUF is an SRAM PUF. In this case the challenge is turning on the SRAM (static random access memory). Due to slight manufacturing differences from one SRAM to another, then the SRAM cells will happen to fall into a unique pattern of 0/1 states upon power up, which thus forms a characteristic fingerprint of the individual SRAM. The PUF is configured to output this as the response upon power-up.

A PUF can be used as a means to generate a key, such as for use in cryptographic algorithms (e.g. to sign or encrypt a document). Another application of a PUF is for identification of a device such as a computer device that incorporates the PUF. If the expected response for a given challenge has previously been determined, then a verifying party can later challenge a target device with the challenge and check whether it gives the expected response, and thereby check whether the target device is the device associated with the expected response.

Because of the limited challenge response space, the input-output (i/o) interface to a weak PUF tends to be restricted to only one or a restricted number of parties (e.g. only one or a limited number of trusted parties may be physically or legally granted access to the PUF, or the interface to the PUF may be password protected or the like). I.e. only the party or parties in question can gain access to the input to the PUF needed to submit the challenge and the output from which the response is received back. For strong PUFs on the other hand, the i/o interface to a strong PUF may be made widely available to a large or unlimited number of parties, not all of whom are necessarily known or trusted parties. The reason is that the challenge response space is large enough that it is infeasible for an adversary to enumerate all of the challenge-response pairs, and therefore the ability for an adversary to freely access the PUF should not compromise its security by allowing an enumeration and spoofing of the PUF, as would be the case for weak PUFs.

In a different area of technology, a blockchain refers to a form of distributed data structure whereby a duplicate copy of the blockchain is maintained at each of a plurality of nodes in a distributed peer-to-peer (P2P) network (referred to below as a “blockchain network”) and widely publicised. The blockchain comprises a chain of blocks of data, wherein each block comprises one or more transactions. Each transaction, other than so-called “coinbase

transactions", points back to a preceding transaction in a sequence which may span one or more blocks going back to one or more coinbase transactions. Coinbase transactions are discussed further below. Transactions that are submitted to the blockchain network are included in new blocks. New blocks are created by a process often referred to as "mining", which involves each of a plurality of the nodes competing to perform "proof-of-work", i.e. solving a cryptographic puzzle based on a representation of a defined set of ordered and validated pending transactions waiting to be included in a new block of the blockchain. It should be noted that the blockchain may be pruned at some nodes, and the publication of blocks can be achieved through the publication of mere block headers.

The transactions in the blockchain may be used for one or more of the following purposes: to convey a digital asset (i.e. a number of digital tokens), to order a set of entries in a virtualised ledger or registry, to receive and process timestamp entries, and/or to time-order index pointers. A blockchain can also be exploited in order to layer additional functionality on top of the blockchain. For example blockchain protocols may allow for storage of additional user data or indexes to data in a transaction. There is no pre-specified limit to the maximum data capacity that can be stored within a single transaction, and therefore increasingly more complex data can be incorporated. For instance this may be used to store an electronic document in the blockchain, or audio or video data.

Nodes of the blockchain network (which are often referred to as "miners") perform a distributed transaction registration and verification process, which will be described in more detail later. In summary, during this process a node validates transactions and inserts them into a block template for which they attempt to identify a valid proof-of-work solution. Once a valid solution is found, a new block is propagated to other nodes of the network, thus enabling each node to record the new block on the blockchain. In order to have a transaction recorded in the blockchain, a user (e.g. a blockchain client application) sends the transaction to one of the nodes of the network to be propagated. Nodes which receive the transaction may race to find a proof-of-work solution incorporating the validated transaction into a new block. Each node is configured to enforce the same node protocol, which will include one or more conditions for a transaction to be valid. Invalid transactions will not be propagated nor incorporated into blocks. Assuming the transaction is validated

and thereby accepted onto the blockchain, then the transaction (including any user data) will thus remain registered and indexed at each of the nodes in the blockchain network as an immutable public record.

The node who successfully solved the proof-of-work puzzle to create the latest block is typically rewarded with a new transaction called the "coinbase transaction" which distributes an amount of the digital asset, i.e. a number of tokens. The detection and rejection of invalid transactions is enforced by the actions of competing nodes who act as agents of the network and are incentivised to report and block malfeasance. The widespread publication of information allows users to continuously audit the performance of nodes. The publication of the mere block headers allows participants to ensure the ongoing integrity of the blockchain.

In an "output-based" model (sometimes referred to as a UTXO-based model), the data structure of a given transaction comprises one or more inputs and one or more outputs. Any spendable output comprises an element specifying an amount of the digital asset that is derivable from the proceeding sequence of transactions. The spendable output is sometimes referred to as a UTXO ("unspent transaction output"). The output may further comprise a locking script specifying a condition for the future redemption of the output. A locking script is a predicate defining the conditions necessary to validate and transfer digital tokens or assets. Each input of a transaction (other than a coinbase transaction) comprises a pointer (i.e. a reference) to such an output in a preceding transaction, and may further comprise an unlocking script for unlocking the locking script of the pointed-to output. So consider a pair of transactions, call them a first and a second transaction (or "target" transaction). The first transaction comprises at least one output specifying an amount of the digital asset, and comprising a locking script defining one or more conditions of unlocking the output. The second, target transaction comprises at least one input, comprising a pointer to the output of the first transaction, and an unlocking script for unlocking the output of the first transaction.

In such a model, when the second, target transaction is sent to the blockchain network to be propagated and recorded in the blockchain, one of the criteria for validity applied at each

node will be that the unlocking script meets all of the one or more conditions defined in the locking script of the first transaction. Another will be that the output of the first transaction has not already been redeemed by another, earlier valid transaction. Any node that finds the target transaction invalid according to any of these conditions will not propagate it (as a valid transaction, but possibly to register an invalid transaction) nor include it in a new block to be recorded in the blockchain.

An alternative type of transaction model is an account-based model. In this case each transaction does not define the amount to be transferred by referring back to the UTXO of a preceding transaction in a sequence of past transactions, but rather by reference to an absolute account balance. The current state of all accounts is stored by the nodes separate to the blockchain and is updated constantly.

SUMMARY

It is recognized in the present disclosure that a PUF can be employed in a mechanism to verify the identity of a target party who claims to have performed a computation issued by an issuing party, such as in a distributed computing application or the like.

According to one aspect disclosed herein, there is provided a computer-implemented method of performing a computation. The method comprises, by target computer equipment of a target party, being the computer equipment which is to perform the computation: obtaining a cryptographic key derived from a response generated by PUF module comprising a physically unclonable function, PUF, the response having been generated by the PUF module based on the PUF in response to a corresponding challenge input to the PUF module, wherein key information comprising the cryptographic key or a corresponding public key is also made available to a verifying party; from an issuing party, receiving a computation request specifying the computation to be performed; in response to the computation request, performing the computation in order to generate a computation result; signing a message comprising the computation result with the cryptographic key; and making the signed message available to the verifying party by sending the signed message to be recorded on a blockchain.

Since the target party is required sign the message comprising the (alleged) computation result, then the target party's identity can be traced and this will disincentivize the target party from returning a false computation result. In embodiments verifying the signature may be a condition for the result to be declared valid by the verifying party. E.g. this may be a condition for the target party being paid in a pay-per-computation scenario.

The verifying party may or may not be the same party as the issuing party.

In embodiments the signed computation result may be recorded on a blockchain. The verifying or issuing party may pay the target party with a transaction that comprises the signed result in the payload of the transaction.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

To assist understanding of embodiments of the present disclosure and to show how such embodiments may be put into effect, reference is made, by way of example only, to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic block diagram of a system for implementing a blockchain;

Figure 2 schematically illustrates some examples of transactions which may be recorded in a blockchain;

Figure 3 schematically illustrates a challenge and response of a PUF;

Figure 4 is a schematic block diagram of a system comprising a PUF;

Figure 5A is a schematic block diagram of an expanded PUF in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein;

Figure 5B is a schematic block diagram of the expanded PUF in a non-expanded mode of operation;

Figure 6 is a schematic illustration of a system involving a trusted third party or publication medium in the distribution of challenge-response pairs; and

Figure 7 is a schematic flow chart of a verification process in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein;

Figures 8A-C schematically illustrate methods of generating a set of challenges from a master challenge in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein;

Figure 9 schematically illustrates a method of recording response data on chain; and

Figure 10 is a schematic flow chart showing a method, in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein, for enabling verification of the identity of a party claiming to have performed a computation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

The robustness of systems such as key-generation systems and privacy-preserving identity systems for both humans and machines may be improved by the involvement of physically unclonable functions (PUFs). These may be parties and/or autonomous machines that are interacting with one another, or with a public system such as the blockchain.

These functions, which are based on physical systems and secured by the assumption of random, undeterminable and non-repeatable variations in the manufacturing of physical devices, can be used to fortify a link established between a human identity and their device, or furthermore to establish an unforgeable unique identity for a device itself.

In the literature, PUFs are categorised into weak and strong types, categorised by their distinct properties. According to one aspect below, there is provided a generalised extended

PUF (ePUF) framework for describing a practical PUF device that has the benefits of both of these types of PUF; namely that an ePUF may produce a large range of challenge-response pairs to be used in applications, while remaining practical and cost-efficient to implement.

More generally various aspects relating to PUFs and the management of challenge-response pairs are disclosed herein. These different aspects may be used individually or in any combination. These include for example:

I. an expanded PUF for expanding the challenge-response space of a PUF;

II. a set of blockchain-agnostic protocols for establishing human and/or device identity by using ePUF devices;

III. a framework for improving these identity protocols by leveraging the blockchain;

IV. a technique for lightweight storage of challenge-response pairs; and

V. a set of novel applications of ePUF devices to a variety of problems, such as the implementation of KYC for simplified payment verification (SPV) processes, and for verifiable computation by devices.

1. PHYSICALLY UNCLONABLE FUNCTIONS (PUFs) - PRELIMINARIES

The term *physically unclonable functions* (PUFs) refers to a class of physical systems and devices which act as general-purpose random functions. These PUFs are uniquely characterised by their physical properties, often at the sub-micron scale, which means each can be uniquely identified and verified by probing those properties with physical stimuli. At a high level, one can consider PUFs as functions that map challenges to responses; pairs of which are often referred to as *challenge-response pairs* (CRPs). One can use the following notation to describe such a map F as:

$$F: C \rightarrow R \ \forall \ (C, R) \in \Phi_{\mathrm{F}} ,$$

where C, R denote challenges and responses respectively, and Φ_{F} is the set of all challenge-response pairs of the form (C, R) that can be produced by the PUF.

The unique physical properties of a PUF are typically the result of random process variations inherent in the manufacturing of physical devices, such as silicon chips. Assumptions typically made about PUFs are that:

1. it is intractable to completely determine the parameters of the physical system by any form of analysis; and
2. the parameters of the physical system are not known by any party, including the original manufacturer of the device that is used as a PUF. This assumption if often referred to as *manufacturer-resistance*.

These assumptions allow a PUF to be used to produce unpredictable yet deterministic responses to arbitrary challenges. This challenge-response process treats a PUF like a physical black box, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows a PUF 302 modelled as a physical black box. A submitting party 103S submits a challenge C as an input to the PUF 302, and in response the PUF 302 generates a corresponding response R. The submitting party submits the challenge from a device such as a computer device (not shown) of the submitting party, which could be the same or a different device as that in which the PUF 302 itself is implemented.

The submitting party 103S could be a party generating challenge-response (CR) pairs as part of a set-up phase (examples discussed later) to establish a set of expected responses linked to the identity of a target party or device. Or the submitting party 103S could be a verifying party submitting a challenge in a later verification phase in order to verify that the generated response matches an expected response, thus verifying the identity of a target device comprising the PUF 302 or a target party in possession of the PUF.

In another example scenario, the submitting party 103S may be a party who wishes to use the generated response as a key, or a seed to generate a key, for use in a cryptographic application such as a blockchain application (e.g. to sign a blockchain transaction).

Figure 4 shows a system comprising an example of an interface to a PUF 302. The system comprises a processor 402 and the PUF 302. The interface comprises interface logic 404, which is stored in memory and arranged to run on the processor 402. The memory on which

the interface logic 404 is stored may comprise one or more memory units employing one or more storage media (e.g. magnetic medium such as magnetic disk or tape, or an electronic medium such as ROM, EPROM, EEPORM, flash memory, SRAM, DRAM, etc.). The processor 402 may comprise one or more processing units (e.g. a general purpose processor such as a CPU, or an application specific or accelerator processor such as a GPU, DSP or crypto-processor). It is also not excluded that the interface logic 404 could instead be implemented partially or wholly in dedicated hardware circuitry, or configurable or reconfigurable circuitry such as a PGA or FPGA.

The submitting party 103S uses a device (not shown) to submit a challengee C to the PUF 302 via the interface logic 404. The device used by the submitting party 103S could for example be a computer device, either an external computer device or the same computer device on which the processor 402 is implemented. The PUF 302 then returns the corresponding response R back to the device of the submitting party 302 via the interface logic 404. In some embodiments, discussed in more detail later, the interface logic 404 may comprise access control logic 406 which restricts access to the PUF 302 to only certain parties, e.g. those that can present recognized credentials such as a password, PIN or biometric information. And/or, a physical interface to the device comprising the processor 402 may be restricted, such as by being located in a room or complex to which only authorized personnel have access, or being kept in a locked box or cabinet. In alternative systems however, the interface logic 404 could be made available for any party to query with challenges.

The challenge-response process of a PUF allows the generation of pseudo-random data values by extracting these challenges from chosen responses. For example, PUFs can be used as key-generators to extract random repeatable data to be used in cryptography. Note that the PUF 302 acts in a deterministic and repeatable way, such that a PUF will yield an identical response when given the same challenge on multiple separate occasions.

There are a number of different physical systems that can be used as PUFs, and there are many different implementations of PUFs using these systems. An illustrative example of a PUF is an optical medium that contains bubbles, which, when probed by a laser, produces a

response diffraction or 'speckle' pattern that is deterministically determined by (i) the position of the laser, and (ii) the small-scale parameters of the optical medium.

1.1. Classes of PUFs

1.1.1 Weak PUF: Weak PUFs are characterised by having a small challenge-response space, and many have only a single challenge such that the size of the CRP space is $|\Phi_F| = 1$. In general, the challenge-response space for a weak PUF is considered to be of the order $O(n)$, where n is the number of components in the PUF that are subject to uncontrollable manufacturing variations.

In the case of weak PUFs, it is typically also assumed that access to the responses of the PUF is restricted. This is because, due to the small number of CRPs serviced by the weak PUF, an adversary may enumerate all such pairs in a reasonable time and may therefore emulate or 'spoof' the behaviour of the PUF. This restriction is sometimes referred to as a *restricted challenge-response interface* when discussing the behaviour of weak PUFs.

These properties make weak PUFs most naturally suited to use in cryptographic applications as a key-generator, where the one (or few) CRP(s) generated by the PUF may be used as a secret key for cryptographic operations, such as for encrypting on-device non-volatile memory (NVM) or for use as an HMAC symmetric key. In such cases, the key derived from the response of the PUF must be kept secret and known only to the possessor of the device for both the security of the cryptographic processes performed and also of the PUF itself.

A prominent and widely-implemented example of a weak PUF is the *SRAM PUF*, where the term 'SRAM' refers to 'static random-access memory'. The design of the SRAM PUF leverages variations in the 'powered-on' state of SRAM chips, which each have a unique fingerprint owing to variations in which SRAM cells in the chip are in '0' or '1' states when the chip is powered-on.

In this case, the PUF construction is considered weak because there is one fixed mode to probe the PUF (i.e. by powering on the SRAM chip), and thus only a single CRP. In this case,

the one and only 'challenge' is to supply the SRAM chip with power, and the response is the unique fingerprint derived from its powered-on state. Access-control, to ensure the secrecy of the response, can also be implemented using the existing memory access-control policy or mechanism in place on the device in which the SRAM PUF is used, or alternative mechanisms employed on the device.

A feature of some PUF implementations, such as in the case of the SRAM PUF, is the use of error-correction in the responses generated by PUFs to ensure the same challenge will yield the same response in a condition- and time-invariant manner. Details of such error-correction techniques are known to a person skilled in the art. In some cases, the error-correction process may require that PUF devices are 'enrolled' initially, to provide a source of helper data which is combined with a response later generated on demand to facilitate the error correction.

1.1.2. Strong PUFs: by contrast to weak PUFs, strong PUFs are characterised by having a large space of possible challenge-response pairs (CR-pairs, or CRPs) that can be utilised. This large space of CRPs means that it is considered infeasible for an adversary to enumerate all of the challenge-response pairs within the domain of a strong PUF in polynomial time. This property means that strong PUFs may have an unprotected challenge-response interface in general, since the ability for an adversary to freely access the PUF will not compromise its security by allowing an enumeration and spoofing of the PUF, as would be the case for weak PUFs. This class of PUFs is also said to produce unpredictable responses, even from the perspective of an adversary who knows a large subset of Φ_F, meaning that strong PUFs act more like a cryptographic hash function with a large domain.

However, there is a restriction placed on strong PUFs that only the response R should be given by the PUF when presented with a challenge C, and no other information about the internal working or operation of the PUF should be leaked in the process. This restriction is to mitigate various analytical attacks whereby an adversary may try to characterise the physical system underpinning the behaviour of the PUF. These are often referred to as modelling attacks in the literature.

Similarly to weak PUFs, some strong PUF constructions may rely on error correction techniques to ensure the accuracy of responses generated by the devices.

The main existing applications of strong PUFs are to facilitate system authentication and identification using the inherent challenge-response mechanism. These mechanisms rely on protocols that involve the creation of CRPs as shared secrets between directly two parties, and often require at least one party to generate a table of CRPs ahead of time (an initial set-up) to be used as authentication tokens for the other party.

One of the earliest examples of a strong PUF implementation was the optical PUF system. In this construction, the PUF comprises an optical medium that contains randomly-distributed physical imperfections, as a result of manufacturing variations, which scatter incident light. This PUF construction is able to be probed by a laser beam directed at the optical scattering medium. In this case, the direction and polarization of the incident beam form the challenge, and the scattering pattern observed is taken as the PUF response.

However, this strong PUF construction is complex to implement, due to the fact that the measuring device is separate from the rest of the PUF device and is also difficult to integrate directly with semiconductor components. This is in addition to costs associated with the apparatus itself, and the lack of portability of the arrangement reducing its utility for everyday applications.

An electrical integrated strong PUF, known as the arbiter PUF (APUF), has since been proposed, which overcomes some of these issues. This construction utilises signal multiplexing and leverages runtime delays in electrical components. Many other strong PUF constructions have been proposed in parallel, although many lack practical suitability for widespread use, and many have associated weakness regarding security and potential attack vectors. For example, a highly problematic potential attack is the man-in-the-middle attack, whereby an attacker can intercept challenges submitted in the clear and spoof certified computations.

1.1.3. Controlled PUFs: a third class of PUFs, known as a controlled PUF (CPUF), improves on existing strong PUF constructions, but using them as a building block. These PUFs take a strong PUF and apply an additional control logic that restricts access to the PUF, which distinguishes them from non-controlled strong PUFs which otherwise may have unprotected challenge-response interfaces.

As shown in Figure 4, the control logic 406 applied to the PUF, which is now part of a larger PUF device, may mediate access to the PUF 302 itself. This means that the control logic component 406 can restrict which challenges are presented to the PUF, as well as controlling how the subsequent responses are revealed to the user.

In CPUF construction, preferably the control logic component 406 should be embedded within or enveloped by the strong PUF component. According to one definition of a CPUF, a PUF is said to be controlled if can only be accessed via an algorithm that is physically linked to the PUF in an inseparable way (i.e. an attempt to circumvent the algorithm will lead to the destruction of the PUF). This embedding should make the probing of the control logic considerably more difficult.

This will establish a mutually-beneficial relationship between the PUF component and the control logic component, such that each mitigates a type of attack on the other. Namely, the encapsulation of the control logic within the PUF device itself protects the control logic from physical or invasive attacks because this would irreparably damage the PUF component and alter its responses, while the control logic naturally protects the PUF component from protocol-level attacks to extract CRPs or other information about the internal physical system underlying the PUF itself.

The applications of CPUFs are much the same as strong PUFs, but can be achieved in a more robust manner. In particular, certified computations and proof of execution can be achieved easily with the protocols outlined above.

An early example of a CPUF, which extended the design of the strong arbiter PUF (APUF), required a control logic to be intertwined with the APUF itself in the manner already

described, such that the control logic and APUF mutually protect one another from different types of attack. The controlled APUF design generates a large set of CRPs from a single static response from an integrated circuit (IC) by incorporating the transient response of the system.

Another known example of a controlled PUF is a PUF-FSM construction. This comprises a strong PUF (an APUF in reality) in conjunction with a finite state machine (FSM) that acts as the control logic that restricts access to the challenge-response interface of the APUF component itself.

1.2. Discussion

1.2.1. Practicality: it is acknowledged in the literature that to produce strong PUFs that are both practical and lightweight, whilst also being integrable with standard complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) components, is highly challenging. By contrast, weak PUFs such as the SRAM PUF are inexpensive to produce and can be trivially combined with integrated circuit architectures.

1.2.2. Attacks on PUFs: there are a number of different attacks that have been proposed and studied, where different attacks may target specific PUF constructions or classes. Some of the most widely-known attack types are listed as follows.

- MITM attacks – these attacks target PUFs uncontrolled strong PUFs, where an adversary may intercept challenges made in the clear to impersonate or spoof the response of a PUF, particularly when used for certified computation.
- Modelling attacks – these attacks have proven a vulnerability for many strong PUF constructions, such as the APUF.
- Chosen challenge attacks – these attacks also affect strong PUFs and are partly the motivation for moving towards CPUF architectures.

There are also other issues with various PUF designs, such as lack of uniqueness in some cases, which have let to exploits that undermine the security of the PUF system in question.

1.2.3 Security models: the security models of PUF constructions tend to share some similarities, such as the assumption that the random process or manufacturing variations from which their CRPs arise is manufacturer-resistant and that it is intractable to characterise the physical system of the PUF by analytical means. However, there are also some differences in the security models for the three main PUF classes.

- **Weak PUFs** – the security of a weak PUF relies on the assumption that its CRPs are kept secret, otherwise the device can be enumerated and impersonated. This means that a weak PUF can be used to provide a source of entropy and secure storage of that entropy for cryptographic operations, but the actual CRP response data itself is not revealed publicly in the process.
- **Strong PUFs** – the security of a strong PUF is dependent on the fact that its CRP space tends to be exponential in the number of challenge bits, and thus the enumeration of the entire space is infeasible in a reasonable timeframe. This means that the CRP responses of a strong PUF can be revealed by the device, unlike in the case of weak PUFs.
- **Controlled PUFs** – the security of a controlled PUF is determined by the combination of control logic, which protects from protocol level attacks, and the PUF itself, which protects from physical attacks.

Two properties of strong PUFs, which differentiate them from weak PUFs, are as follows. Firstly, a strong PUF has a large set of CRPs. This means that a strong PUF has a large challenge space Φ_F, where a weak PUF has typically only one (or few) challenge(s) available to it. A strong PUF is moreover considered unpredictable with respect to any and all known CRPs. In other words, knowledge of an arbitrary number of CRPs gives no advantage in predicting the response of a new challenge.

Secondly, a strong PUF can have an unprotected challenge-response interface. The assumption is made that a given strong PUF does not require access-control logic to restrict access to the challenge-response interface. This means that any party with physical access to the PUF may apply challenges, and obtain responses, arbitrarily, without revealing any additional information about the PUF or its physical properties.

A controlled PUF has a protected challenge-response interface but also a large challenge-response space like a strong PUF.

2. EXPANDED PUF (ePUF)

The following discloses a system and method for expanding the challenge-response (CR) space of a PUF, by generating multiple secondary CR pairs from a given CR pair of the base PUF 302. This may be referred to herein as an "expanded PUF", or "ePUF". The idea could be used for example to expand the challenge-response space of a weak PUF with only one or a limited number of inherent CR pairs, without the complexity or impracticality of a typical strong PUF mechanism (such as an optical PUF requiring a laser, optical medium and sensor). However, in principle the disclosed techniques could be used more generally to expand the number of CR pairs of any base PUF, whether weak, strong, controlled or otherwise; or to transform a CR pair of any PUF for other purposes, such as obfuscation or re-usability.

Figure 5A shows an expanded PUF (ePUF) 500 in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein. The ePUF 500 comprises a constituent base PUF 302, which could for example be a conventional weak PUF. The ePUF 500 further comprises a transform function 502, e.g. a hash function such as a cryptographic hash function (for instance SHA256, etc.). The ePUF 500 also comprises interface logic 404', which may be similar to the interface logic 404 discussed in relation to Figure 4, but with additional interfacing functionality. The interface logic 404' and transform function 502 may be implemented in software, e.g. embedded firmware, which is stored in memory and arranged to run on a processor 402 (such as shown in Figure 4, but running the additional functionality of the interface 404' and transform function 502). The memory on which the interface function 404' and transform logic 504 are stored may comprise one or more memory units employing one or more storage media (e.g. magnetic medium such as magnetic disk or tape, or an electronic medium such as ROM, EPROM, EEPORM, flash memory, SRAM, DRAM, fuse latches, etc.). The processor on which they are run may comprise one or more processing units (e.g. a general purpose processor such as a CPU, or an application specific or accelerator processor such as a GPU, DSP or crypto-processor). It is also not excluded that the interface logic 404'

and/or transform function 502 could instead be implemented partially or wholly in dedicated hardware circuitry, or configurable or reconfigurable circuitry such as a PGA or FPGA.

The interface logic 404' is operatively coupled to the transform function 502 and optionally also to the base PUF 302. The base PUF 302 is operatively coupled to the transform function. The interface logic 404' is arranged to receive in input from, and provide an output to, a device of a submitting party 103S (not shown in Figure 5A), e.g. a computer device, which could be the same device that the ePUF 500 is implemented on or an external device. The submitting party 103S could be a party using the ePUF 500 to perform a set up, to generate a set of challenges and expected responses to be linked to an identity for future reference; or could be a verifying party using the PUF at a later time to verify whether the generated response matches a previously-established expected response (or a challengee generating the response to provide to a verifying party). In another example application, the submitting party 103S could be using the ePUF 500 to produce a response for use as a key, or as a seed for generating a key. E.g. this could be used as a cryptographic key to encrypt or sign a message, e.g. to sign a part of a blockchain transaction.

The base PUF 302 is operable to generate a "primary" response Rw as an output, corresponding to receiving a "primary" challenge Cw as an input. The "primary" challenge-response (CR) pair herein refers to a base or "native" (i.e. inherent) CR pair of the base, constituent PUF 302. In some embodiments, the base PUF 302 may be capable of generating only a single base (i.e. primary) response Cw in response to a single challenge Cw, like a weak PUF.

In operation, the interface logic 404' receives challenge data (a challenge input) comprising at least a "secondary" challenge Ci from the device of the submitting party 103S. In addition, the primary (base) challenge Cw is input to the base PUF 302 in order to generate the primary (base) response Rw. In embodiments the submitting party 103S is required to include the base challenge Cw in the challenge data input to the ePUF 500, and the interface logic 404' routes this to the base PUF 302 in order to generate the primary response Rw. However, it is not excluded in other embodiments that the primary challenge Cw is input to

the base PUF 302 from an internal source such as a memory, fuse latches or dedicated circuitry. Either way, the transform function 502 is arranged to receive as inputs: a) the secondary challenge Ci as received in the input challenge data from the submitting party, and b) the primary response Rw as generated by the base PUF 302. The transform function 502 is a function configured to map a combination of these, deterministically, onto a unique respective "secondary" response Ri corresponding to the particular combination of Ci and Rw input to the transform function 502. The secondary challenge response pairs may be referred to herein as "secondary" in the sense that they are layered on top of the primary (base) CR pair, being generated in part based on the primary response Rw. They could also be called the "expanded layer" or "supplementary" challenges and responses.

In embodiments, the transform function 502 comprises a hash function, e.g. a cryptographic hash function such as a SHA or DSA hash function. There are at least two different ways a hash function can be used. In the first, the transform function 502 comprises a hash of a preimage, wherein the preimage comprises a combination (e.g. concatenation) of the received secondary challenge Ci and the generated primary response. I.e. Ri = H(Ci||Rw). Or more generally the preimage could comprise other elements as well, and/or another form of combination other than concatenation.

In the second, alternative approach, the transform function 502 comprises a hash of a preimage wherein the preimage comprises the received secondary challenge and the hash function is initialized with the generated primary response. I.e. Ri = H(Ci) where H is initialized by Rw. Or again more generally the primage of H could comprise other elements as well, as long as it comprises at least Ci. Being initialized by Rw means that the mapping itself, of preimages to outputs defined by the hash function H, will depend on the Rw. Whereas in the previous case, the mapping of preimages to outputs caused by H does not depend on Rw, rather the preimage depends on Rw. I.e. in the previous paragraph, the preimage depends on Rw, and in this paragraph only H depends on Rw.

More generally still, in principle any function can be used as along as it deterministically and uniquely maps a combination of Ci and Rw onto a respective value of Ri, for each possible Ci in the domain to be accommodated by the ePUF 500.

The secondary challenge Ci can take any of a number of different possible values, and the transform function 502 will map them to respective values of the secondary response Ri based on the value of the particular received secondary challenge Ci and the value of the primary response Rw. Hence the ePUF 502 is capable of expanding the CR space of a given primary (base) CR pair to multiple secondary CR pairs. In embodiments Ci can take any arbitrary value within the range of values supported by the variable used (e.g. if it is a 32 bit integer it can take any of 2^32 values).

In some embodiments, the ePUF 500 may be capable of operating in an alternative mode of operation, as shown in Figure 5B. In this case, the interface logic 404' detects that the input challenge data comprises only the primary challengee Cw. In response it routes the received value of Cw to the base PUF 302, and routes the resulting primary response Rw back to the device of the submitting party 103S. In other words in this embodiment, the ePUF 500 is also capable of operating in a "legacy" or "non-expanded" mode.

Optionally, depending on the application, the interface logic 404' may comprise access control logic 406 which restricts access to only a limited number of possible submitting parties 103S, such as by only granting access to a party that is able to present credentials (e.g. password, PIN or a biometric input) which it recognizes as being mapped to an authorized party. In this case the ePUF 500 could be considered as a form of CPUF. Alternatively the physical interface to the ePUF 500 could be legally or physically protected, such as by keeping the device comprising the ePUF 500 in a room or premises to which only a limited set of parties is permitted access, or keeping it in a locked box, cabinet or room. In this case the ePUF 500 could be considered like a kind of expanded weak PUF.

Alternatively or additionally to such physical restrictions on the interface to the PUF, access may also be restricted by restricting access to the primary challenge. E.g. the target party 103T ("Alice", discussed later) may be the only party who knows Cw.

As another alternative however, access to the interface logic 404' may not be restricted, e.g. any party may be free to query it via the Internet. In this case the ePUF 500 could be considered like a kind of strong PUF 502 created by expanding a weak base PUF mechanism.

The arrangement shown in Figure 5A provides a new hybrid class of PUF device referred to herein as an *expanded PUF (ePUF)*, which may be used generally as a framework for a number of applications, such as presented later.

An ePUF may be defined as a physical device or system, as shown in Figure 5A, comprising the following three modules in conjunction: a base PUF 302 such as an inherently weak PUF; a transform function 502 such as a cryptographic hash function; and an interface logic module 404'. As discussed, an ePUF 500 may be 'expanded' relative to a regular PUF 302 by introducing a transform function 404' such as a cryptographic hash function, because it increases the size of the unique challenge space Φ_F from $|\Phi_F| \sim 1$ for the base weak PUF 302 to $|\Phi_F| \gg 1$ that is bounded instead by the choice of hash function, rather than the physical system of the weak PUF.

The idea of realising a system that combines the large CRP space of a strong PUF with the practicability of a weak PUF, per se, has been explored previously. It is known to use multiple FPGA-based weak PUFs in combined operation to produce a system with the character of a strong PUF. The intention here is partly to 'expand' the CRP space of the base weak PUFs. However, the existing constructions of this nature are limited in practice. In the case of the FPGA design mentioned above, the system must be built on an FPGA and is still subject to a relatively low CRP space ($\sim 2^{10}$).

The ePUF design disclosed herein is designed to be extremely light-weight, in that it only requires the addition of an interface logic component 404' and a cryptographic hash function (or other such transform function) 502 to an existing weak PUF 302. For instance, if an SRAM PUF is chosen as a widely-used weak PUF 302, then the addition of the two remaining modules 404', 502 should not produce significant overhead, e.g. being implemented as a small algorithm in software (e.g. firmware) or a relatively simple piece of hardware circuitry. Moreover, the space of possible outputs of the ePUF 500 is expanded to

the range of the chosen hash or transform function 502, which is considerably larger than the above. For instance, if the SHA-256 hash function is chosen, the space of possible outputs (and therefore CRPs) is increased to $2^{256} - 1$ immediately, and there is no need to scale the hardware overhead farther than embedding the hash function module itself.

Figure 5A shows the schematic design for an expanded PUF (ePUF) 500. The embodiments where a *cryptographic* hash function is used also mean that an ePUF 500 has the property that its CRPs are unpredictable, which is also the case for strong PUF systems.

The control logic element 406 of the ePUF device may also be generalised in this construction. The control logic 406 may be implemented simply as physical security, similar to an SRAM PUF, if this is appropriate to the application, for example.

Alternatively, the control logic module 406 may be implemented as a software control module similar to that used with CPUFs, where it is in fact embedded within the PUF device itself to provide the mutual security benefits of encapsulation discussed previously. However, a point here that differentiates the ePUF design from that of CPUFs in particular is that there is no strict requirement for the control logic to be implemented this way.

It need not necessarily be assumed that an invasive attack on the control module 406 necessarily alters the behaviour of the weak PUF component 302 in the ePUF design. Instead, the implementation of this element may be chosen on a case-by-case basis.

2.1. Challenges and responses for ePUFs

The set of challenge-response pairs $(C, R) \in \Phi_{\mathrm{F}}$ corresponding to an ePUF may be defined in the following way:

$$\Phi_{\mathrm{F}} = \{(C_w, R_w), (C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \dots, (C_N, R_N)\},$$
$$F : C_i \longrightarrow R_i, \qquad \forall i \in (1, N)$$
$$F_w : C_w \longrightarrow R_w$$

where (C_w, R_w) is a privileged CRP corresponding to the base challenge-and-response of the weak PUF 302 and where the map F_w is defined by the unique physical properties of the

weak PUF. The pair (C_w, R_w) may be referred to as the *base or primary* pair of the ePUF herein. The map F conversely is defined by the cryptographic hash function chosen for the ePUF. Figures 5A-B show extracting responses from an ePUF 500 where (Fig. 5B) the challenge is only Cw and (Fig. 5A) the challenge also comprises Ci.

In some embodiments of an expanded PUF, all challenges $C_i, i \in \{1,2, \dots, N\}$ must be accompanied by the base challenge C_w, and the base response R_w is incorporated in the process for generating all other responses R_i, as shown in Figure 5A.

The process depicted in Figure 5A for generating generic CRPs using an ePUF is designed to use the base challenge-response pair (C_w, R_w) by expanding this base secret pairing by applying it to any other arbitrary challenge C_i. The algorithm used to generate CRPs from an ePUF may be tailored to a specific use, provided that the it makes use of the base pair (C_w, R_w) in a deterministic way. A simple example of such an algorithm, denoted $getResponse(\,)$, can be written as follows.

***getResponse*( ):**

Inputs: $Challenge$

1. Obtain $challenge$ from user/client.
2. Check $challenge == C_w$?
    i. If yes:
        1. Probe weak PUF module with C_w to obtain R_w
        2. Set $Response \leftarrow R_w$
    ii. If no:
        1. Separate $Challenge$ into C_w and C_i components.
        2. Probe weak PUF module with C_w to obtain R_w
        3. Send C_i and R_w to hash function module.
        4. Compute $hash(C_i, R_w, H)$
        5. Set $Response \leftarrow hash(C_i, R_w, H)$
3. Return $Response$

Outputs: $Response$

The function $hash(C_i, R_w, H)$ is a generic function that is used to compute a hash digest, using the cryptographic hash function H. The function $hash(\,)$ may be implemented in a number of ways, such as by simply computing $H(C_i \parallel R_w)$ in a simple case, or it could be implemented by taxing computing $H(C_i)_{R_w}$ where the value R_w has been used as the initial vector of the hash function H. Either way, the output of $hash(\,)$ depends on both C_i and R_w.

The diagrams in Figures 5A and 5B show that an ePUF 500 may be equipped with interface logic 404', optionally comprising a *control logic* module 406. In embodiments there are two possible paths to take in generating a response, where the path of Fig. 5B is used when the challenge is simply C_w, and the path of Fig. 5A is used when the challenge is a new value C_i that is accompanied by C_w. This is deterministic.

The disclosed ePUF design may be used to provide any of the following advantages and/or others.

- A large CRP space, defined by the domain and range of the chosen hash function.
- Flexibility to separate control logic from the PUF itself.
- The security primitives of a weak PUF.

This means that a user can use an ePUF device analogously to a CPUF device, but where the controlled access to the PUF includes both (I) securely storing the base CRP of the weak PUF (C_w, R_w), and (II) restricting physical access to the PUF device to the intended user only. In this model, the base pair (C_w, R_w) acts like a master key from which an extremely large number of other CRPs of the form (C_i, R_i) may be derived, and where C_i may be submitted by an external or third party.

2.2. Applications of an ePUF

The possible applications (use cases) of an ePUF device can be classified broadly into at least two main categories:

1. Linking identity to activities or computational operations; and
2. Acting as a key-generator for cryptographic operations.

Application (1) is most commonly implemented by existing strong PUFs, and (2) is most commonly by existing weak PUFs. The fact that the ePUF construction combines the properties of each means the ePUF may be treated as equally suited to either application. In application (1), an advantage is that one may implement such applications far more easily in practice using an ePUF generally than most strong or controlled PUFs.

3. IDENTITY LINKAGE SYSTEM

In this section, there is disclosed a generic framework for linking either human or machine identities to PUF devices.

Embodiments may use an *expanded PUF (ePUF)*. The intention here is to formulate a PUF architecture that provides for a robust, yet highly generalised and flexible identity system, which can be repurposed for many different use cases. The properties we aim to capture in this construction are:

- A large CRP space comparable to that of a strong PUF;
- A practicality comparable to that of a weak PUF; and
- A control logic that is more flexible than that of a CPUF.

The ePUF design may be used as the basis model for a PUF used in a range of identity-establishment protocols. Embodiments may allow for independence of the end user or machine in the process. Where existing schemes, which may also be repurposed to use an ePUF, rely on a trusted third party to directly access the PUF device during setup, ePUF-based proposed systems may allow the end user of a PUF device to instead establish an identity and participate in onward authentications without the need for the third party to access the device locally or directly during setup.

Some implementations may improve the robustness of and extend further these identity-linkage protocols by introducing a public blockchain. Two concepts that may be employed here are (A) the use of the blockchain as a tamper-proof CRP-management system, and (B) the use of a blockchain network as a time-stamping service for mediating request-response

messages used in the identity-linkage protocols, and providing an efficient revocation system.

Figure 6 shows an example system for identity linkage and verification in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein. Figure 7 shows a corresponding method.

The system comprises a PUF module 603, computer equipment 102T of a target party 103T, and a response data store 601. The PUF module 603 comprises an ePUF 500 as described previously in relation to Figures 5A and 5B, or alternatively it may just comprise a conventional PUF 302 or PUF plus conventional interface logic 404 as described previously in relation to Figures 3 and 4. The response data store 601 could be part of third-party computer equipment 602 and administered by a trusted third party, or could instead be a distributed peer-to-peer storage medium such as a blockchain. The third party equipment 602 may for example comprise server equipment comprising one or more server units located at one or more geographic sites (cloud storage techniques are in themselves known in the art). The system may further comprise computer equipment 102V of a verifying party 103V, or in some alternative cases the verifying party may interact directly with the PUF module 603, target party's computer equipment 102T, or third party computer equipment 602.

Any reference herein to an action of a user or party 103, or such like – whether the verifying party 103V, target party 103T or a third party – covers the possibility that the party is acting through computer equipment 102 of that party. For conciseness this will not necessarily be stated explicitly each time, but it will be understood as implicitly covered. This covers both the possibilities that either A) the action is triggered by or performed under control of a manual user input by the party to the computer equipment, or B) the action is performed automatically by the computer equipment on behalf of the party (saying that a party performs an action does not necessarily mean that a human user of that party manually instigates that action, but could instead mean that the party's equipment performs that autonomously action on his/her behalf). For avoidance of doubt, note also that a party may refer to a single individual person or a group or people or organization, e.g. a company, a charity, a government body, or a municipal or academic institution.

The computer equipment 102T of the target party 103T may be operatively connected to the response data store 601 (e.g. by a connection to the third party equipment 602). The computer equipment 102V of the verifying party 103V may be operatively connected to the response data store 601 (e.g. by a connection to the third party equipment 602). The computer equipment 102T of the target party 103T may be operatively connected to the computer equipment 102V of the verifying party 103V. Any of these connections may be formed via one or more networks, e.g. one or more wide area networks such as the Internet or a mobile cellular network. In embodiments any of these connections may be formed via a respective secure channel, e.g. established based on a shared secret shared between the two parties in question. Wherever it is said herein that two parties communicate in any way, such as by sending a challenge or receiving back a response, etc., it will be understood that this covers the possibility that these communications may be performed via any suitable direct or network connection between their respective computer equipment (102V, 102T; 102T, 602; or 102V, 602). For the sake of conciseness this will not necessarily be stated explicitly each time, but it will be understood as implicitly covered.

The target party 103T is a party whose identity is to be verified based on the PUF module 603, or who owns or is otherwise responsible for or associated with a device to be verified based on the PUF module 603. The verifying party 103V is a party who is to perform the verification. There may be multiple verifying parties 103V (each of whom may act through respective computer equipment 102V), but for ease of illustration only one is shown in Figure 6. The PUF module 603 may be in possession of the target party 103T. It may be incorporated into his/her computer equipment 103T, or connected to it, e.g. as a peripheral or via a local network, or a combination (e.g. the interface logic 404/404' could be implemented on the computer equipment 103T and the PUF 302 could be an external peripheral). Alternatively the PUF module 603 may be in the possession of the trusted third party. It may be incorporated in or connected to the third party computer equipment 602, e.g. as a peripheral or via a local network, or a combination (e.g. the interface logic 404/404' could be implemented on the third party equipment 602 and the PUF 302 could be an external peripheral).

In general any of the target party 103T, verifying party 103V or third party may take the role of the submitting party discussed previously in relation to Figures 3, 4 and 5. Any of the target party 103T, verifying party 103V or third party may take the role of the submitting party, or may take the role of a setting-up party using the PUF module 603 to establish a set of one or more CR pairs and link them to an identity of the target party 103T for use in a later verification phase. Some specific example scenarios are discussed in more detail later.

The response data store 601 stores response data that was generated by the PUF module 603 in a set-up phase. The data store 601 stores this response data in association with evidence of an identity of a target, which may be the target party 103T or a device of the target party 103T. The verifying party 103V has access to the response data store 601 and can use this to verify the identity of the target at a later time during a verification phase. To do this the verifying party 103V challenges the target to produce a response Ri to a challenge Ci that was previously included in the set of challenges used in the set-up phase. If the target can produce the expected response according to what is stored in the response data store 601, then this evidences that the target is in possession or control of the PUF module 603, and thus may be assumed to be the same party whose identity was captured in the set-up phase.

In an alternative variant, the response data store 601 may store one or more public keys of one or more respective public-private key pairs that were generated based on the response(s) produced in the set-up phase, e.g. using the response as a seed. If the target later signs a message (e.g. a document or blockchain transaction) using one of the private keys, the verifying party can verify the signature using the corresponding public key from the response data store 601. Note that in such variants, the term “response data” is being used in a broader sense to cover data derived from the response Ri, not necessarily the explicit value or an attestation of the response Ri.

The response data store 601 may be publicly accessible, or access may be restricted to only a limited set of one or more parties including at least one verifying party 103V. It may be hosted on a third party system 602 or in a peer-to-peer manner, or alternatively it may be

implemented in the computer equipment 102T of the target party 103T or the computer equipment 102V of the verifying party 103V.

Referring to Figure 7, the method comprises two phases: a set-up phase 702 and a verification phase 704. In the set-up phase, at step 710 one of the target party 103T or third party, acting as a setting-up party, submits a set of one or more challenges Ci (i=1…n, where n>=1) into the PUF module 603. These are the secondary challenges in the case where an ePUF 500 is used. In the case where the target party 103T has possession of the PUF module 603 and is performing the set-up, the challenges Ci could be generated by the target party 103T or received from the third party system 602 or verifying party 103V. In the case where the third party has possession of the PUF module 603 and is performing set-up, the challenges could be generated by the third party system 602 or received from the target party 103T or verifying party 103V. Either way, in response the PUF module 603 generates a corresponding set of responses Ri based on the PUF 302/500. These are the secondary responses in the case of an ePUF 500. There method thus generates a set of CR pairs {Ci, Ri}.

In embodiments, access to the PUF module 903 is restricted such that only the target party 103T (and the setting-party if a different party) can gain access to the responses Ri. This could be achieved by access control logic 404 or 404' which may only grant access to a party who can present recognized credentials such as a password, PIN, biometric data, etc. And/or access to the physical interface to the PUF module 603 may be physically protected, such as by keeping it in a locked container, cabinet or room; or it may be legally protected such as by storing the PUF module 603 in a room or complex to which only certain personnel are permitted access. As another alternative or additional restriction, in the case of an ePUF 501, knowledge of the primary challenge Cw may be restricted, such that only the target party 103T (and in embodiments a trusted third party acting as a separate setting-up party) knows Cw.

At step 720, the method comprises storing response data in the response data store 601. In embodiments the stored response data comprises a record of the generated CR pairs {Ci, Ri}. The record of each CR pair comprises a record of the respective response Ri stored in a manner that indicates the corresponding challenge Ci of the pair. In embodiments the

stored record of each response Ri comprises an explicit value of the response, i.e. the actual value of Ri, explicitly disclosed to a verifying party 103V who can read the records. The value could be stored in the clear or could be encrypted if the verifying party has the decryption key to decrypt the value, but nonetheless the stored value is still said to be the explicit value for the purposes herein in the sense that it is explicitly disclosed to the verifying party 103V. Alternatively the record of the response could comprise an "attestation" of the response Ri, comprising a deterministic transform of Ri. An example would be to store the value of a hash H(Ri) or double hash H^2(Ri). This enables the verifying party to check whether a value of the response R'i is the same as that recorded in the store by checking whether the same transform applied to R'i (e.g. H(R'i) or H2(R'i)) matches the attestation. This has the benefit that the actual value of the response Ri is not disclosed. Therefore this variant of the method can be particularly useful where the store 601 is a public medium such as a blockchain. However encryption would be another possibility.

Where the response data is stored in encrypted form, then each piece of response data (e.g. each CR pair) may be encrypted individually, each requiring a different respective decryption key to decrypt. Alternatively subsets or the whole set of response data (e.g. all CR pairs for a given target party 103T) could be encrypted together, all being decryptable together as a group with the same key.

The response data, e.g. the CR pairs, are stored in the response data store 601 in association with evidence of the identity of the target. For example the target party 103T may be required to produce one or more pieces of identification information, such as a passport, as part of the set-up. The evidence held in the response data store 601 in association with the response data could comprise a copy of this information itself being stored explicitly in association with the response data (either in the clear or in encrypted form accessible to the verifying party 103). Alternatively, if the response data store 601 is administered by a trusted third party or the verifying party 103V themselves, then the mere fact of the response data being registered in the repose data store 601 in association with a particular identity could be considered sufficient evidence (the assumption being that the verifying party 103V trusts the setting-up party and the party administering the response data store

601, e.g. the trusted third party, to have suitably checked the target party's identification information upon set-up).

In the verification phase 704, at step 730 the verifying party 103V accesses the response data store to determine the response data to use in a verification operation. In embodiments, there are a plurality of potential verifying parties 103V, and each is allocated a different respective subset of one or more of the CR pairs. I.e. the response data store 601 will only disclose, to a given verifying party 103V, the expected response(s) Ri of the CR pair(s) allocated to that party. E.g. this scheme may be administered by the trusted third party system 602. Such a scheme advantageously keeps the CR pairs separate, such that one verifying party 103V cannot pretend to another to be the target. However if all the verifying parties 103V given access to the store 601 are trusted then this is not essential.

In embodiments, the verifying party 103V does not initially know the challenge that he/she is going to use, and determines this by accessing it from the data store 601 along with the corresponding response data (e.g. response or attestation). Alternatively the verifying party 103V does know in advance which challenge he/she intends to use, and uses this to look up which response data is mapped to this in the data store 601.

In a scenario where the verifying party 103V (or indeed any party) accesses data from a blockchain, such as to determine the response data and/or challenge, then accessing the blockchain may be performed either by directly querying a node of the blockchain network, or indirectly by querying an intermediate service that caches blockchain data or mediates queries on behalf of parties seeking access to blockchain data. E.g. the verifier 103V could access the data from another service provider who is not directly connected to the blockchain network 106, but might just give the response-related data, and perhaps also a Merkle proof.

At step 740, the verifying party 103V submits a challenge Ci to the target party 103T, who is in possession or control of the PUF module 603. This is a challenge corresponding to one of the records which the verifying party 103V accessed from the response data store 601 in step 730. Note that in the scenarios where the trusted third party was in possession of the

PUF module 603 at set-up, the PUF module 603 may be physically passed from the trusted third party to the target party 103T between the set-up phase 702 and verification phase 704.

In response to the submitted challenge Ci, the PUF module 603 generates the corresponding response Ri, which the target party 103V returns to the verifying party. At step 750 the verifying party checks whether the received response Ri is consistent with the response expected according to the response data that was accessed from the response data store 601 at step 730.

As mentioned, the party performing the set-up steps 702 could be the target party 103T or a trusted third party who stores the response data (e.g. CR-pairs). In further variants, these steps could be performed by another, coordinating party such as a trusted oracle (another third party other than the party who, in embodiments, runs the third party computer equipment 602 comprising the data store 610). In such embodiments the data store 601 could be the third-party system 602 (of a different third party) or a public peer-to-peer medium such as a blockchain. And/or in yet further variants, there could be provided a separation between the party that performs the inputs to the PUF module 603 and the party that receives the outputs.

As also mentioned, there are at least two possibilities for the manner in which the response Ri is recorded in the response data store 601. This first is simply to explicitly store the actual value of Ri itself. In this case step 750 simply comprises comparing the stored value (which was established at set-up 702) with the value R'i (the purported value of the response Ri) now received in response to the submitted challenge Ci (in the verification phase 704). If they match, then the method branches to step 760 where the identity of the target party 103T is declared verified. Otherwise the method branches to step 770 where the identity of the target party 103T is declared not verified.

The second possibility is that only an attestation of Ri is stored in the response data store 601, e.g. a hash or double hash. In this case, the verifying party 103V applies the same transformation that was used to generate the attestation to the response R'i that he/she

received back from the target party 103T in the verification phase 704. If this matches the stored attestation, then the method branches to step 760 where the identity of the target party 103T is declared verified. Otherwise the method branches to step 770 where the identity of the target party 103T is declared not verified.

In the response data store 601, there are at least two possibilities for the manner in which the corresponding challenge Ci is indicated as being associated with each recorded response Ri. The first is simply to store an explicit value of each CR pair {Ci, Ri}, i.e. to store the actual values of Ri and Ci (either in the clear or encrypted). Alternatively, a second, more lightweight way, in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein, is to store a master challenge Cm from which the challenges Ci can be derived according to a predetermined, deterministic challenge-derivation function f.

This is illustrated in Figure 8A. Each response Ri is stored in association with a respective index. The function f is either stored in the response data store 601 or is pre-known to the verifying party 103V. Either way, the verifying party 103V inputs the master challenge Cm into the function f to determine the challenge Ci corresponding to the index i of at least one of the responses Ri. The verifying party 103V then uses this challenge Ci to verify the target.

In some such embodiments, the function f may also be a function of identification information 806, which may be a single piece of identification information or a combination 804 (e.g. a concatenation) of a plurality of pieces of identification information 802 (e.g. passport info, mother's maiden name and fingerprint info). This may comprise identification information of the target party 103T. This enables a set of challenges Ci specific to the particular target party 103T, which is advantageous for security reasons as uniqueness may be important, for instance if the same third party system 602 is used to generate challenge sets for different target parties. Using personal identification information such as passport information or mother's maiden name of the target party 103T is a good option since it is something he/she already knows of has, and tends to keep private.

Alternatively or additionally, the identification information 806 may comprise identification information of the verifying party 103V, such that f is a function of the identity of the

particular verifying party 103V. This could be used to allocate a particular subset of one or more particular challenges to a particular verifying party 103V, such that different verifying parties 103V are given different challenges Ci to use in the verification 704.

In some embodiments, regardless of how the master challenge Cm is formed, the challenges Ci may be mapped to the master challenge Cm in a chained manner, such that the C1 = f(Cm), C2 = f(C1), etc., as shown in Figure 8B. In other words a first challenge C1 is determined by applying the function f to the master challenge Cm, and then the second challenge C2 is determined by applying the same function f to the first challenge, and so forth. As an example, f may comprise a hash function.

In another variant, the challenges Ci may be mapped to the master challenge Cm in a hierarchical manner, as shown in Figure 8C. This will be discussed in more detail later.

The chained approach is more lightweight and also easier to recover from the root information if f( ) does not require any data other than the root key. In the case of the hierarchical derivation, the indices in the tree would be added in, which would not be needed for a simple chain like this: C_m, H(C_m), H(H(C_m))… , e.g. where f( ) is just a hash function.

Regardless of the form of f(), or whether the master challenge comprises identification information and/or other information, in embodiments the master challenge Cm may be received by the third party system 602 from the target party 103T during set-up 702. The third party then stores the received master challenge in the data store 601 (e.g. either locally or on chain), for future use in verification 704. Alternatively the third party system 602 receives the set of challenges Ci from the target party 103T, and derives the master challenge Cm therefrom, e.g. by applying an inverse of the function f(). In variants of these approaches, the third party system 602 may receive the identification information, master challenge or set of challenges from elsewhere other than from the target party 103T, e.g. from an oracle or coordinating party (not shown). A combination of such approaches could also be used (e.g. one piece of identification information being received from the target party and one being obtained from elsewhere). Or in further alternatives, a third party is not

involved and the target party 103T stores the master challenge on chain him/herself (or in some other peer-to-peer publication medium).

In further variants of the method of Figure 7, the response data stored in the response data store 601 may not comprise a record of the CR pair(s) generated at set-up. Instead, the response data may comprise a public key of a public-private key pair, or a set of such public keys, wherein each of the one or more key pairs was generated based on a respective PUF response Ri from the set-up phase 702. E.g. the response Ri may be used as a seed in a public-private key-pair generation algorithm. In such embodiments, the method proceeds as set out in Figure 7, except that at step 730 the verifying party accesses one of the stored public keys, and at step 740 the verifying party 103V does not submit a challenge Ci to be input to the PUF module 603 of the target. Instead, the verifying 103V party obtains a message (e.g. document, file, or part of a blockchain transaction) that was (purportedly) signed by the target. This message could be sent to him/her by the target party 103T, or the verifying party 103V could access it autonomously from a publication medium such as a blockchain or website. Either way, at step 750, the check comprises using the public key accessed from the store 601 to verify the signature applied to the message (based on known public-private key signature verification techniques which are, in themselves, well known in the art).

The following now describes some example identity-establishment and verification protocols for ePUFs or PUFs more generally in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein. Consider a prover Alice (target party 103T) and verifier Bob (verifying party 103V). There are at least three different challenge types in a PUF identity system. By way of example the below will be described in terms of an ePUF, but more generally any PUF device could be used (any device comprising a PUF module 603).

1. **Remote PUF challenge -** The verifier challenges the prover remotely, by requesting a response from Alice to a challenge submitted by Bob. This mode assumes that the verifier knows an expected response(s) from the prover's PUF, and also that the PUF is possessed by the legitimate owner.

2. **Local PUF challenge** - The verifier challenges the prover locally, by interacting with the PUF device controlled by Alice. This mode assumes the verifier knows something about the prover's identity, but nothing about the behaviour of their PUF.

3. **Cryptographic challenge** – The verifier challenges the prover to satisfy some cryptographic requirement related to her identity, such as by signing a message with a key that is provably linked to a certified public key.

In the case of types 1 and 2, the challenge is explicitly dependent on the PUF module 603 from both the prover and verifier's perspectives. The challenge, and thus the corresponding verification process, in these cases is intrinsically linked to the operation of the PUF device (the device comprising the PUF module 603, e.g. Alice's computer equipment 102T). In these cases, we are using the property of PUF devices that their physical state can be uniquely bound to an identity, and the PUF therefore plays a central role in the identity system being utilised.

Note that the terms '*remote*' and '*local*' refer specifically to the interaction between the verifier and the prover's PUF at the time of making a *challenge*. This does not preclude a remote challenge protocol from having a setup phase that involves a local interaction between the prover and verifier ahead of time.

In case 3 however, the challenge and verification process need only be related to a PUF device from the perspective of the prover. The verification is not dependent on the verifier knowing whether or not a PUF has been used by the prover in generating the response to their challenge. In this case, the method is simply using the utility of a PUF as a key-generator for Alice, rather than for its utility in linking identity to the device itself.

In the following, example implementations are provided for the *setup* and *verification*, and optional *update*, and *revocation* processes, for identity systems in each of the three modes of operation mentioned above. In embodiments a generic trusted third party is involved in the processes relating to a PUF-based identity system. This is because such identity systems tend to require such a third party in order to meaningfully assure integrity and trust in

identity and related credentials. In the case where an individual's identity is to be established and used in such a system, the trusted third party in question may be a certificate authority, government agent, or a financial services provider such as a bank. In the case where an identity is to be established for a machine or non-human entity, the third party may be a device manufacturer, issuer, regulator, or some other relevant actor. This case is particularly suited to an *internet of things (IoT)* or further a *blockchain of things (BoT)* paradigm, where identity is to be assigned to different members of a network of devices which may perform tasks or calculations cooperatively to achieve some goal.

3.1. Remote PUF System

3.1.1. Setup: In the case of remote PUF challenges, assume that the verifier that submits a challenge C to the prover knows the expected response R ahead of time. This means that the setup process in this case must establish a set of CRPs (i.e. at least one) between Alice and another party that can be used to derive a shared secret between them that can be used to authenticate Alice's identity at a later time.

Assume that Alice establishes this shared secret with the generic third party equipped to establish the identity, as mentioned previously, and this third party may or may not be the verifying party that participates in a verification process with Alice later. In the case where the verifying party is distinct from the identity-establishing third party, assume that the verifying party may obtain the relevant CRP information used for the shared secret(s) from the third party.

There are two distinct options for the setup phase here, categorised by whether Alice is the sole party with access to the PUF device at all times, or whether the trusted third party may also have access to the PUF device during setup phase only.

Case 1: Alice has sole access to PUF

1. The ePUF device is manufactured and distributed to Alice.
2. Alice applies to link her identity to her ePUF device by contacting a trusted third party.

i. The third party establishes an identification account for Alice, and requests proof of her identity.

ii. Alice supplies the third party with the relevant identification documents or credentials.

iii. The third party verifies Alice's identity.

3. Alice and the third party establish a secure communication channel for the rest of the setup process (e.g. via standard Diffie-Hellman key exchange):
   i. Alice and the third party exchange public keys P_A, P_T respectively.
   ii. Alice and the third party independently establish an ephemeral secret for the remaining setup communications as $S = S_A \cdot P_T = P_A \cdot S_T$.
   iii. Alice and the third party begin communicating over a channel, e.g. an AES-encrypted channel, secured by S.
4. The third party sends Alice a set of challenges $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n$ over the secure channel.
5. Alice obtains the responses $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_n$ from the ePUF device.
6. Alice sends the third party the responses $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_n$ over the secure channel.
7. The third party stores the responses CRP set $\{(C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \ldots, (C_n, R_n)\}$ against Alice's identity account.

Case 2: Third party accesses PUF during setup

1. The third party has the knowledge of the base pair and the hash function. E.g. the ePUF device is manufactured and distributed to the trusted third party*.
2. The third party obtains the base CRP (C_w, R_w) from the device.
3. Alice applies for an identity-linked ePUF device by contacting the third party. This may be done over an unsecured communications channel.
   i. The third party establishes an identification account for Alice, and requests proof of her identity.

ii. Alice supplies the third party with the relevant identification documents or credentials.

iii. The third party verifies Alice's identity and assigns the ePUF device and its base pair (C_w, R_w) to Alice's account. The shared secret is, or is a derivative of, this CRP.

4. The third party sends the ePUF device to Alice.

(* The device may be first distributed to Alice, and then sent by Alice. However, in most cases it will make more sense for the device to be distributed directly to the third party. E.g. if the device is a smart debit card, the card may be sent from manufacturer to the issuing bank, and then from the issuing bank to the customer Alice, following the PUF setup.)

The setup protocol establishes a shared secret(s) between Alice and the trusted third party to be used to authenticate Alice's identity (or PUF-containing device) at a later time during a verification process. The cases are also similar in that they both preferably involve secure communication between Alice and the trusted third party.

However, a distinction between the two cases is that case 1 achieves the secure communication by establishing a secure communication channel, whereas case 2 achieves it by means of physical security.

Another difference to note between the two protocols in case 1 and 2 respectively, is that in case 2 the trusted third party can derive as many CRPs without the PUF as Alice, while in case 1 this party has to store a fixed number of pairs.

This is an advantage of case 2 over existing protocols for setting up a user with a PUF device because it allows the trusted third party to generate an arbitrary number of CRPs remotely, whereas in existing protocols the trusted third party may need to cooperate with either the end user or device manufacturer to do so. The same technical advantage may be achieved in case 1 if the step is added of Alice sending the base pair (C_w, R_w) to Bob over a secure channel (trusting the third party not to use the base pair in a malicious way).

Note that the use of secure communication in the setup phase allows for future communications, such as the verification process, to be transmitted over unsecured channels. This has the benefit of allowing verifications to occur with fewer technical limitations, such as the need for both parties to be online at the time of verification, and only requires the additional secure communications overhead in this one-time setup process.

3.1.2. Verification: In the mode of remote PUF verification, recall that there were two distinct cases in the setup phase, which are reflected in slightly differing remote verification protocols, as detailed below.

Case 1: Alice has sole access to PUF

1. Bob obtains an unused CRP, such as (C_1, R_1), from the set $\{(C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \dots, (C_n, R_n)\}$ established by Alice and the third-party during setup.
    i. If Bob is also the trusted third party, he simply retrieves an element from the set.
    ii. If Bob is not the trusted third party, he communicates with the third party by requesting an unused CRP for Alice.
2. Bob sends the challenge C_1 to Alice.
3. Alice obtains the candidate response R_1' from her ePUF device and sends it to Bob.
4. Bob verifies whether $R_1' == R_1$:
    i. If yes, the verification passes.
    ii. If no, the verification fails.
5. The pair (C_1, R_1) is subsequently removed by the trusted third party, leaving the set of remaining challenge-response pairs $\{(C_2, R_2), (C_3, R_3), \dots, (C_n, R_n)\}$.

Note that in step 1.ii. the single-use nature of the CRPs ensures that it is not possible for an arbitrary Bob to 'impersonate' Alice using a particular CRP, because the trusted third-party can simply monitor the use of each pair in each given situation and should use a fresh CRP for every authentication attempt.

Case 2: Third party accessed PUF during setup

1. Bob generates a fresh challenge C for the verification. This may be done randomly, or deterministically from some other data (e.g. known KYC data, biometrics, images).
2. Bob sends the challenge C to Alice.
3. Alice obtains the candidate response R' from her ePUF device and sends it to Bob.
4. Bob obtains the expected response R.
    i. If Bob is the trusted third party, he is able to calculate the response directly by computing $R = hash(C, R_w, H)$ *.
    ii. If Bob is not the trusted third party, he sends C to the third party and requests the response R.
5. Bob verifies whether $R' == R$:
    i. If yes, the verification passes.
    ii. If no, the verification fails.

(* This is because the third party obtained the base pair (C_w, R_w) during setup protocol (case 2) which implies that R_w is known to them. It is also assumed that the hash function H is known to at least the third party, if not everybody, i.e. is a public standard such as SHA-256).

3.1.3. Update: It may also be desirable to specify a process for Alice and the third party to establish fresh CRPs given their single-use nature in verification (and other useful protocols, such as logins).

Case 1: Alice has sole access to PUF. In this case, another secure channel is established to transmit challenges and responses between Alice and the third party, as in the setup. We assume that Alice has at least one remaining CRP of the form (C_i, R_i) to establish a shared secret of the form $S = H(R_i)$ or similar, or has access to a previous shared secret $S = S_A \cdot P_T = P_A \cdot S_T$ from DH key-exchange.

1. Alice and the third party establish a secure communication channel using a shared secret S. This can be derived in many ways, the protocol is agnostic to this.
2. The third party sends Alice a set of challenges $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n$ over the secure channel.
3. Alice obtains the responses $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_n$ from the ePUF device.
4. Alice sends the third party the responses $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_n$ over the secure channel.
5. The third party stores the responses CRP set $\{(C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \ldots, (C_n, R_n)\}$ against Alice's identity account.

Note that steps 2-5 at least are identical to the setup steps 4-7.

See also the previous comment regarding Alice telling third party (Cw, Rw) over the channel.

Case 2: Third party accessed PUF during setup. In this case, the third party can generate an arbitrary number of CRPs indirectly, because they have knowledge of both the base pair (C_w, R_w) and the hash function $H(\,)$. This means that there is no requirement for an interactive update in this case.

3.1.4. Revocation: a further part of the identity system may be for a particular ePUF device to be revoked, such that is it no longer used for identity purposes. The revocation process is simple and can be performed as either (i) a revocation by the third party, independently of the user Alice, or (ii) a revocation by Alice conveyed as a revocation request.

The first case does not require any technological means involving ePUFs or otherwise. The second case does not require a protocol or solution specific to ePUFs, because a good example of the need for a revocation in the first case is if Alice has lost the physical device containing the ePUF, or if it has been compromised in some way.

However, if it is desired to optionally leverage the ePUF in a revocation process, wherein Alice still has physical control of the device, then it may be prescribed that Alice's request is authenticated using one of the CRPs she and the third party have established (or derived

shared secret thereof) such as by means of an HMAC or an encrypted message using a CRP response or secret as the key in each case. For the reason mentioned above, however, this is not considered a strict requirement of the system by any means.

3.2. Local PUF System

3.2.1. Setup: the setup that can be employed for the local PUF is exactly the same as the setup for the remote PUF, but a difference between the local and remote cases is how the verification step is carried out below.

3.2.2. Verification: In this scenario, a verification is being performed locally. This means that the verification process requires that both the prover (Alice) and verifier (Bob) are in the same physical location.

This scenario may be relevant for example to court proceedings (for human identity), where Alice is legally required to interact with an investigation locally using her ePUF device, or where an analysis of an IoT system is to be performed (for device identity) where an administrator of a system may wish to explicitly check the response of a particular device locally. It may also be relevant to payment scenarios.

Other scenarios to which such a process is applicable could include diagnostics on a vehicle after a crash, where the authorities wish to determine exactly which digital component issued an instruction. In this case, the input C may be some environmental or dynamics conditions, and the response R would be part of the instruction that was given by the device.

A distinction between the local PUF verification protocol, outlined below, and the previous remote PUF verification protocols is that this local protocol does not assume the verifier has knowledge of the ePUF's response ahead of time. In other words, the response generated during the local verification process is not available to the verifier ahead of time.
It is likely in this scenario, however, that the challenge used in the verification process is meaningful in some way. For example, consider a machine whose identity can be considered

to be the base pair (C_w, R_w) of its embedded ePUF component. The verification process may be performed to verify that it was this particular device that previously yielded an output R from a given input C.

1. Bob obtains the relevant challenge C to submit to the ePUF device, based on the CRP in question (C, R).
2. Bob gains access to the ePUF device.
3. Bob uses the ePUF device to generate the candidate response $R' = hash(C, R_w, H)$.
4. Bob verifies whether $R' == R$:
    i. If yes, the verification passes.
    ii. If no, the verification fails.

In these scenarios Bob does not know the candidate response R' ahead of time, but rather is verifying that the response he now receives from the PUF device matches a previously generated response. For instance this can be used to verify (e.g. in court) that a person (Alice) or a device that prevails produced a response is the same person or device that is now present (e.g. in the court). E.g. in the example of the digital component, this would have been configured to issue the instruction upon generation of R based on some input challenge C. E.g. if the device is a self-driving car and the component receives a challenge derived from or comprising the data "the car in front is too close" then the response R is generated, and R triggers the component to issue the instruction to apply the brakes. So in the retrospective diagnostic verification, the verifier believes the car slowed down and wishes to verify that the conditions were actually that "the car in front was too close" to trigger that response.

3.2.3. Update: The process for generating updated CRPs can follow the same logic as put forward for the remote case, as the key difference in that scenario only applies to verification.

3.2.4 Revocation: the same techniques described for remote revocation in are also valid here.

3.3. Cryptographic PUF system

3.3.1 Setup: In this case, Alice establishes an identity with a third party using standard cryptographic means, but using an ePUF device in the process.

In this scenario, the third party may optionally have knowledge that an ePUF has been used in the process. Similarly, for an identity established in this manner, the verifier of an identity may or may not know that an ePUF device is involved in the identity verification process. In short, the following protocol only stipulates that the owner of the device, Alice, has knowledge that an ePUF device is involved in the identity system.

1. The ePUF device is manufactured and distributed to Alice.
2. Alice applies to establish a cryptographic identity by contacting a trusted third party.
    i. The third party establishes an identification account for Alice, and requests proof of her identity.
    ii. Alice supplies the third party with the relevant identification documents or credentials.
    iii. The third party verifies Alice's identity.
3. Alice chooses a cryptographic method for establishing a cryptographic link to her identity, e.g. establishing a certified asymmetric key-pair using her CRP.
    i. The third party obtains a public key P_A from Alice, where $P_A = s_A \cdot G$ is an EC key pair.
    ii. The third party requests that Alice signs (e.g. via ECDSA) a message m using the private key s_A.
    iii. Alice generates the ECDSA signature $Sig(P_A, m)$ and sends to the third party.
    iv. The third party verifies the signature.
4. If the signature is valid, the third party certifies the key P_A against Alice's identity.

Step 3 involves using a cryptographic scheme of the user's choice, but that we assume the relevant key involve in the process will be a derivative of a CRP response known only to Alice. In the example chosen above, this means that the private key S_A would be derived from a particular ePUF response R, such as $S_A = H(R)$.

3.3.2 Verification: In the cryptographic case, the identity verification is performed using cryptographic information that was established during the cryptographic setup phase detailed previously. In this case, we take the example that a certified EC asymmetric key-pair was established against Alice's identity during setup, and we now use that key for verification.

The protocol below could, however, be simply adapted for any other cryptographic scheme simply by substituting the existing setup and verification protocols for those schemes where appropriate. A difference here is using an ePUF device as a secure key-generator for the setup and verification process, which reduce the risk of malicious compromise to the holder Alice.

1. Bob obtains the identity-linked information P_A, e.g. a certified key.
    i. If Bob is the trusted third party, he simply retrieves P_A from Alice's account.
    ii. If Bob is not the trusted third party, he communicates with the third party and requests a certified public key for Alice.
2. Bob chooses a message m for Alice to sign, and sends to Alice.
3. Alice generates a signature over the message m.
    i. If Alice wishes to sign with her certified key, she generates the signature $Sig(P_A, m)$.
    ii. If Alice wishes to sign with a single-use derived key, she generates the signature $Sig(P_\alpha, m)$, where $P_\alpha = P_A + H(d) \cdot G$ and d is some single-use data*.
4. Alice sends the signature to Bob. At this point, Alice may also send the data d if Bob does not already know it.

5. Bob verifies the signature against the public key using P_A (and d, if applicable).
    i. If the signature verification passes, the identity verification passes.
    ii. If the signature verification fails, the identity verification fails.

(* This data may be related to the verification, such as an invoice message, or biometric fuzzy-matching data. The data d may be chosen by Bob or Alice. Alternatively, d may be a shared secret known to Alice and Bob e.g. derived using Diffie-Hellman key exchange and/or an HMAC.)

The cryptographic verification process above may also apply to an identity established independently, as described in the previous section, if the identity was established with a similar cryptographic primitive such as an EC or PGP key.

3.3.3. Update: *t*he process of updating Alice's identity here is not dependent on the use of the ePUF device in key-generation, and as such it is not necessary to prescribe any particular method here. Instead, standard methods for updating a certified key such as P_A may be used.

It may simply be assumed that the ePUF will be involved in key-generation for any required signatures or other cryptographic process required by the existing process(es).

3.3.4. Revocation: *S*imilarly, it is not necessary to prescribe a particular revocation protocol here, but defer to standard mechanisms. Once more, it may be assumed that the ePUF will be involved in the background as a key-generator for the relevant cryptographic operations.

3.4. Independent PUF Mechanism

3.4.1 Setup: In the independent case for establishing an identity using an ePUF device, consider the scenario where an entity wishes to establish either a human identity independently of any third party, or a device identity within a closed system. The only party

involved in this process is Alice, the 'owner' of the ePUF device and the eventual prover during later verifications.

Case 1: Alice establishes human identity

1. Alice obtains an ePUF device.
2. Alice probes the ePUF with a challenge C.
3. Alice obtains the response R from the ePUF.
4. Alice uses the pair (C, R) to establish an identity for herself:
    i. Alice may use a cryptographic setup to establish a non-certified identity key P_A.
    ii. Alice publishes her identity key against her identity.
5. Alice may wish to publish attestations to her CRP, such as the double-hash $H^2(R)$ of the response.

This case, where Alice establishes a 'self-sovereign' identity for herself, is useful to an extent in providing a unique and reproducible device identifier for a device that only she controls. However, the lack of a trusted third party in such an identity system means that a verifier must later trust the link between the prover's identity and the prover's device. This may have very limited applications in the real world.

Case 2: Alice established identity for a device

1. Alice obtains an ePUF device.
2. Alice probes the ePUF with a challenge C.
3. Alice obtains the response R from the ePUF.
4. Alice uses the pair (C, R) to establish an identity for the device within her system:
    i. Alice maps the pair (C, R) to her device.
    ii. Alice keeps a database of all her devices and CRP mappings.
5. Alice may wish to publish attestations to her CRP, such as the double-hash $H^2(R)$ of the response.

In the case above, where we create a 'self-sovereign' identity for a device, it can be seen that the design may be highly useful within a closed system, where an administrator is simply looking to identify different devices within that system. This may also be useful for attesting to others later on. However, the lack of a trusted third party during setup still limits the prover in convincing an *external* verifier that the devices have not been changed, depending on the scenario.

Note that case 1 and case 2 may be considered as the same process but with a different intended purpose. Therefore case 1 and case 2 may be taken together as a method for generating a 'self-sovereign' identity, for human or machine, where in the latter case the system administrator (such as Alice, in an IoT system) is a trusted entity herself. In both cases, Alice is the trusted entity.

3.4.2 Verification: The verification process for this case is as simple as probing the ePUF device with a given challenge and inspecting its response. More complex proofs or evidence for external parties may need to be built on top of this to prove the identity to them.

3.4.3 Update: the update process for this case is simply a repetition of the setup process, where the administrator (in this case Alice) enumerates additional CRPs for forward use.

3.4.4. Revocation: in this scenario, the only type of identity revocation is the case where the administrator (Alice) wishes to independently revoke the identity, as there is no third party involve in this process. This means that revocation may be as simple as Alice's cessation of use of the ePUF device, and the purging of her database of its CRPs.

In a later section, ways are disclosed in which this self-sovereign revocation can be made more robust by blockchain attestation and evidencing, such that it may convince an external party at a later time.

3.5. IDENTITY-BASED CRP MANAGEMENT

In the above, especially the *remote* PUF-based identity system, the single-use nature of the CRPs used to authenticate identity in the setup and verification protocols presents a CRP-management challenge for the involved parties.

For instance, in the cases where the trusted third-party does not access the PUF device during setup, it may be desired that many CRPs are enumerated $\{(C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \dots, (C_n, R_n)\}$ for the third party to store for future verifications. Moreover, because the ePUF itself acts as a deterministic pseudo-random mapping of challenges to responses, the responses will appear mutually unrelated. Therefore the burden on the trusted third party to tabulate and store sets of CRPs for their users or clients will quickly present a scaling issue if they must service a large number of users.

Figure 8A illustrates a deterministic derivation of challenges from identification data in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein.

According to such embodiments, in order to address the issue of the burden on the trusted third party, CRP management is handled primarily in the generation of the challenges $C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n$. The idea here is that the challenges should be derived deterministically (and possibly also hierarchically) from a single master challenge, or master data from which a master challenge is derived. This concept is similar to the use of hierarchical deterministic (HD) wallets to manage single-use Bitcoin keys, in that it is designed to allow the trusted third-party (or another relevant party) to recover all relevant challenges using only the master data, which is termed a 'wallet seed' in the Bitcoin scenario.

In some such embodiments, identification data 806 of Alice (the target party 103T) is used as the master data for generating a large range of challenges to determine which CRPs are used in identity systems such as those proposed in the previous sections. The identification data itself may comprise a combination 804 of different data elements 802, but in combination they preferably have the following properties:

- **Uniqueness** – the identification data is unique to the entity it pertains to; and
- **Secrecy** – the identification data is known only to the entity (or owner thereof) it pertains to.

Simple examples of constituents to the identification data may include a passport number, national insurance number, names, birth date, or the answers to a security question (e.g. mother's maiden name), or serial numbers and manufacturing information in the case of device identification. However, it is perceived that data obtained by more advanced technological means may also be used, such as fingerprint or facial recognition data, which may be extracted using fuzzy-magic techniques to conserve uniqueness.

In embodiments, the 'identification data' used as the master input, from which a set of challenges are derived, may comprise a multiplicity of the above. One reason for this is to ensure that the information preserves secrecy with respect to as many trusted third-parties as possible, given that as some of the protocols in the previous sections rely on sharing challenges with the third-party and/or with an external verifying party. Identification data comprising multiple components will be harder for any third-party so fully duplicate without the consent of the proving party Alice.

A mechanism for deterministically generating CRPs using identification data is shown in Figure 8A. The constituent parts of the identification data are first combined by process 'A' (804), which may be concatenation, bitwise operations (e.g. XOR) or any other relevant combination operation, with a note that this operation may seek to preserve privacy by converting the raw data into an obfuscated form.

The identifying data is then turned into a master challenge C_m, by means of a hash function or similar process. Finally, the master challenge is used to deterministically derive a sequence of single-use challenges $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n$ using a derivation function $f()$. In embodiments, as shown in Figure 8B, the derivation function f() may comprise a hash function and the injection of a nonce, such that each successive challenge is generated as $C_i = SHA256(C_{i-1}, i)$, where i serves as the nonce.

The process A, the generation of a challenge C_m from identification data, and the derivation function $f()$ may all be configured depending on the needs of the particular implementation.

Figure 8C shows another particular example, namely a hierarchical and deterministic derivation of challenges (responses not pictured). It may be desirable to derive the single-use challenges C_i from the master C_m in a hierarchical manner, as shown in Figure 8B. In this case, CRP-management is further improved by the fact that the generation of a particular challenge does not need to depend on all of the previous challenges, as in the previous case.

The use of deterministic derivation of challenges based on identity data reduces the storage overhead for both the prover Alice and the trusted third-party in identity protocols. It is possible for either party to only store the (or a subset of) the identifying data, and recompute the necessary challenges as and when required.

In addition, Alice also has the option to tailor her privacy by choosing to withhold or share as much information with each identification service as desired, with the trade-off that she may store more data herself.

4. EXAMPLE BLOCKCHAIN SYSTEM

The following describes an example blockchain system that may be employed in certain embodiments of the present disclosure. Note that "Alice" and "Bob" are just arbitrary names for two parties, and Alice and Bob do not necessarily have the same roles in this section as in the preceding section or following sections.

In some embodiments, response data based on the output of a PUF may be stored on chain, for instance as discussed in the preceding section. The response data stored on chain may take the form of the actual response itself, or a transformation of it such as a hash or double hash (a so-called attestation or hash-commit), or a public key of a public-private key pair derived from the PUF response. Whatever form the on-chain response data takes, it is something that enables another, verifying party to check whether a target response or signature presented as evidence of identity is as expected. In further embodiments, the

blockchain may be used as a means to manage challenge-response pairs, such as to update or revoke them.

The following describes an example of a blockchain system that may be used to implement such features.

4.1. Example system overview

Figure 1 shows an example system 100 for implementing a blockchain 150. The system 100 may comprise a packet-switched network 101, typically a wide-area internetwork such as the Internet. The packet-switched network 101 comprises a plurality of blockchain nodes 104 that may be arranged to form a peer-to-peer (P2P) network 106 within the packet-switched network 101. Whilst not illustrated, the blockchain nodes 104 may be arranged as a near-complete graph. Each blockchain node 104 is therefore highly connected to other blockchain nodes 104.

Each blockchain node 104 comprises computer equipment of a peer, with different ones of the nodes 104 belonging to different peers. Each blockchain node 104 comprises processing apparatus comprising one or more processors, e.g. one or more central processing units (CPUs), accelerator processors, application specific processors and/or field programmable gate arrays (FPGAs), and other equipment such as application specific integrated circuits (ASICs). Each node also comprises memory, i.e. computer-readable storage in the form of a non-transitory computer-readable medium or media. The memory may comprise one or more memory units employing one or more memory media, e.g. a magnetic medium such as a hard disk; an electronic medium such as a solid-state drive (SSD), flash memory or EEPROM; and/or an optical medium such as an optical disk drive.

The blockchain 150 comprises a chain of blocks of data 151, wherein a respective copy of the blockchain 150 is maintained at each of a plurality of blockchain nodes 104 in the distributed or blockchain network 106. As mentioned above, maintaining a copy of the blockchain 150 does not necessarily mean storing the blockchain 150 in full. Instead, the blockchain 150 may be pruned of data so long as each blockchain node 150 stores the block

header (discussed below) of each block 151. Each block 151 in the chain comprises one or more transactions 152, wherein a transaction in this context refers to a kind of data structure. The nature of the data structure will depend on the type of transaction protocol used as part of a transaction model or scheme. A given blockchain will use one particular transaction protocol throughout. In one common type of transaction protocol, the data structure of each transaction 152 comprises at least one input and at least one output. Each output specifies an amount representing a quantity of a digital asset as property, an example of which is a user 103 to whom the output is cryptographically locked (requiring a signature or other solution of that user in order to be unlocked and thereby redeemed or spent). Each input points back to the output of a preceding transaction 152, thereby linking the transactions.

Each block 151 also comprises a block pointer 155 pointing back to the previously created block 151 in the chain so as to define a sequential order to the blocks 151. Each transaction 152 (other than a coinbase transaction) comprises a pointer back to a previous transaction so as to define an order to sequences of transactions (N.B. sequences of transactions 152 are allowed to branch). The chain of blocks 151 goes all the way back to a genesis block (Gb) 153 which was the first block in the chain. One or more original transactions 152 early on in the chain 150 pointed to the genesis block 153 rather than a preceding transaction.

Each of the blockchain nodes 104 is configured to forward transactions 152 to other blockchain nodes 104, and thereby cause transactions 152 to be propagated throughout the network 106. Each blockchain node 104 is configured to create blocks 151 and to store a respective copy of the same blockchain 150 in their respective memory. Each blockchain node 104 also maintains an ordered set (or "pool") 154 of transactions 152 waiting to be incorporated into blocks 151. The ordered pool 154 is often referred to as a "mempool". This term herein is not intended to limit to any particular blockchain, protocol or model. It refers to the ordered set of transactions which a node 104 has accepted as valid and for which the node 104 is obliged not to accept any other transactions attempting to spend the same output.

In a given present transaction 152j, the (or each) input comprises a pointer referencing the output of a preceding transaction 152i in the sequence of transactions, specifying that this output is to be redeemed or "spent" in the present transaction 152j. In general, the preceding transaction could be any transaction in the ordered set 154 or any block 151. The preceding transaction 152i need not necessarily exist at the time the present transaction 152j is created or even sent to the network 106, though the preceding transaction 152i will need to exist and be validated in order for the present transaction to be valid. Hence "preceding" herein refers to a predecessor in a logical sequence linked by pointers, not necessarily the time of creation or sending in a temporal sequence, and hence it does not necessarily exclude that the transactions 152i, 152j be created or sent out-of-order (see discussion below on orphan transactions). The preceding transaction 152i could equally be called the antecedent or predecessor transaction.

The input of the present transaction 152j also comprises the input authorisation, for example the signature of the user 103a to whom the output of the preceding transaction 152i is locked. In turn, the output of the present transaction 152j can be cryptographically locked to a new user or entity 103b. The present transaction 152j can thus transfer the amount defined in the input of the preceding transaction 152i to the new user or entity 103b as defined in the output of the present transaction 152j. In some cases a transaction 152 may have multiple outputs to split the input amount between multiple users or entities (one of whom could be the original user or entity 103a in order to give change). In some cases a transaction can also have multiple inputs to gather together the amounts from multiple outputs of one or more preceding transactions, and redistribute to one or more outputs of the current transaction.

According to an output-based transaction protocol such as bitcoin, when a party 103, such as an individual user or an organization, wishes to enact a new transaction 152j (either manually or by an automated process employed by the party), then the enacting party sends the new transaction from its computer terminal 102 to a recipient. The enacting party or the recipient will eventually send this transaction to one or more of the blockchain nodes 104 of the network 106 (which nowadays are typically servers or data centres, but could in principle be other user terminals). It is also not excluded that the party 103 enacting the

new transaction 152j could send the transaction directly to one or more of the blockchain nodes 104 and, in some examples, not to the recipient. A blockchain node 104 that receives a transaction checks whether the transaction is valid according to a blockchain node protocol which is applied at each of the blockchain nodes 104. The blockchain node protocol typically requires the blockchain node 104 to check that a cryptographic signature in the new transaction 152j matches the expected signature, which depends on the previous transaction 152i in an ordered sequence of transactions 152. In such an output-based transaction protocol, this may comprise checking that the cryptographic signature or other authorisation of the party 103 included in the input of the new transaction 152j matches a condition defined in the output of the preceding transaction 152i which the new transaction assigns, wherein this condition typically comprises at least checking that the cryptographic signature or other authorisation in the input of the new transaction 152j unlocks the output of the previous transaction 152i to which the input of the new transaction is linked to. The condition may be at least partially defined by a script included in the output of the preceding transaction 152i. Alternatively it could simply be fixed by the blockchain node protocol alone, or it could be due to a combination of these. Either way, if the new transaction 152j is valid, the blockchain node 104 forwards it to one or more other blockchain nodes 104 in the blockchain network 106. These other blockchain nodes 104 apply the same test according to the same blockchain node protocol, and so forward the new transaction 152j on to one or more further nodes 104, and so forth. In this way the new transaction is propagated throughout the network of blockchain nodes 104.

In an output-based model, the definition of whether a given output (e.g. UTXO) is assigned (e.g. spent) is whether it has yet been validly redeemed by the input of another, onward transaction 152j according to the blockchain node protocol. Another condition for a transaction to be valid is that the output of the preceding transaction 152i which it attempts to redeem has not already been redeemed by another transaction. Again if not valid, the transaction 152j will not be propagated (unless flagged as invalid and propagated for alerting) or recorded in the blockchain 150. This guards against double-spending whereby the transactor tries to assign the output of the same transaction more than once. An account-based model on the other hand guards against double-spending by maintaining an

account balance. Because again there is a defined order of transactions, the account balance has a single defined state at any one time.

In addition to validating transactions, blockchain nodes 104 also race to be the first to create blocks of transactions in a process commonly referred to as mining, which is supported by "proof-of-work". At a blockchain node 104, new transactions are added to an ordered pool 154 of valid transactions that have not yet appeared in a block 151 recorded on the blockchain 150. The blockchain nodes then race to assemble a new valid block 151 of transactions 152 from the ordered set of transactions 154 by attempting to solve a cryptographic puzzle. Typically this comprises searching for a "nonce" value such that when the nonce is concatenated with a representation of the ordered pool of pending transactions 154 and hashed, then the output of the hash meets a predetermined condition. E.g. the predetermined condition may be that the output of the hash has a certain predefined number of leading zeros. Note that this is just one particular type of proof-of-work puzzle, and other types are not excluded. A property of a hash function is that it has an unpredictable output with respect to its input. Therefore this search can only be performed by brute force, thus consuming a substantive amount of processing resource at each blockchain node 104 that is trying to solve the puzzle.

The first blockchain node 104 to solve the puzzle announces this to the network 106, providing the solution as proof which can then be easily checked by the other blockchain nodes 104 in the network (once given the solution to a hash it is straightforward to check that it causes the output of the hash to meet the condition). The first blockchain node 104 propagates a block to a threshold consensus of other nodes that accept the block and thus enforce the protocol rules. The ordered set of transactions 154 then becomes recorded as a new block 151 in the blockchain 150 by each of the blockchain nodes 104. A block pointer 155 is also assigned to the new block 151n pointing back to the previously created block 151n-1 in the chain. The significant amount of effort, for example in the form of hash, required to create a proof-of-work solution signals the intent of the first node 104 to follow the rules of the blockchain protocol. Such rules include not accepting a transaction as valid if it assigns the same output as a previously validated transaction, otherwise known as double-spending. Once created, the block 151 cannot be modified since it is recognized and

maintained at each of the blockchain nodes 104 in the blockchain network 106. The block pointer 155 also imposes a sequential order to the blocks 151. Since the transactions 152 are recorded in the ordered blocks at each blockchain node 104 in a network 106, this therefore provides an immutable public ledger of the transactions.

Note that different blockchain nodes 104 racing to solve the puzzle at any given time may be doing so based on different snapshots of the pool of yet-to-be published transactions 154 at any given time, depending on when they started searching for a solution or the order in which the transactions were received. Whoever solves their respective puzzle first defines which transactions 152 are included in the next new block 151n and in which order, and the current pool 154 of unpublished transactions is updated. The blockchain nodes 104 then continue to race to create a block from the newly-defined ordered pool of unpublished transactions 154, and so forth. A protocol also exists for resolving any "fork" that may arise, which is where two blockchain nodes104 solve their puzzle within a very short time of one another such that a conflicting view of the blockchain gets propagated between nodes 104. In short, whichever prong of the fork grows the longest becomes the definitive blockchain 150. Note this should not affect the users or agents of the network as the same transactions will appear in both forks.

According to the bitcoin blockchain (and most other blockchains) a node that successfully constructs a new block 104 is granted the ability to newly assign an additional, accepted amount of the digital asset in a new special kind of transaction which distributes an additional defined quantity of the digital asset (as opposed to an inter-agent, or inter-user transaction which transfers an amount of the digital asset from one agent or user to another). This special type of transaction is usually referred to as a "coinbase transaction", but may also be termed an "initiation transaction" or "generation transaction". It typically forms the first transaction of the new block 151n. The proof-of-work signals the intent of the node that constructs the new block to follow the protocol rules allowing this special transaction to be redeemed later. The blockchain protocol rules may require a maturity period, for example 100 blocks, before this special transaction may be redeemed. Often a regular (non-generation) transaction 152 will also specify an additional transaction fee in one of its outputs, to further reward the blockchain node 104 that created the block 151n in

which that transaction was published. This fee is normally referred to as the "transaction fee", and is discussed blow.

Due to the resources involved in transaction validation and publication, typically at least each of the blockchain nodes 104 takes the form of a server comprising one or more physical server units, or even whole a data centre. However in principle any given blockchain node 104 could take the form of a user terminal or a group of user terminals networked together.

The memory of each blockchain node 104 stores software configured to run on the processing apparatus of the blockchain node 104 in order to perform its respective role or roles and handle transactions 152 in accordance with the blockchain node protocol. It will be understood that any action attributed herein to a blockchain node 104 may be performed by the software run on the processing apparatus of the respective computer equipment. The node software may be implemented in one or more applications at the application layer, or a lower layer such as the operating system layer or a protocol layer, or any combination of these.

Also connected to the network 101 is the computer equipment 102 of each of a plurality of parties 103 in the role of consuming users. These users may interact with the blockchain network 106 but do not participate in validating transactions or constructing blocks. Some of these users or agents 103 may act as senders and recipients in transactions. Other users may interact with the blockchain 150 without necessarily acting as senders or recipients. For instance, some parties may act as storage entities that store a copy of the blockchain 150 (e.g. having obtained a copy of the blockchain from a blockchain node 104).

Some or all of the parties 103 may be connected as part of a different network, e.g. a network overlaid on top of the blockchain network 106. Users of the blockchain network (often referred to as "clients") may be said to be part of a system that includes the blockchain network 106; however, these users are not blockchain nodes 104 as they do not perform the roles required of the blockchain nodes. Instead, each party 103 may interact with the blockchain network 106 and thereby utilize the blockchain 150 by connecting to

(i.e. communicating with) a blockchain node 106. Two parties 103 and their respective equipment 102 are shown for illustrative purposes: a first party 103a and his/her respective computer equipment 102a, and a second party 103b and his/her respective computer equipment 102b. It will be understood that many more such parties 103 and their respective computer equipment 102 may be present and participating in the system 100, but for convenience they are not illustrated. Each party 103 may be an individual or an organization. Purely by way of illustration the first party 103a is referred to herein as Alice and the second party 103b is referred to as Bob, but it will be appreciated that this is not limiting and any reference herein to Alice or Bob may be replaced with "first party" and "second "party" respectively.

The computer equipment 102 of each party 103 comprises respective processing apparatus comprising one or more processors, e.g. one or more CPUs, GPUs, other accelerator processors, application specific processors, and/or FPGAs. The computer equipment 102 of each party 103 further comprises memory, i.e. computer-readable storage in the form of a non-transitory computer-readable medium or media. This memory may comprise one or more memory units employing one or more memory media, e.g. a magnetic medium such as hard disk; an electronic medium such as an SSD, flash memory or EEPROM; and/or an optical medium such as an optical disc drive. The memory on the computer equipment 102 of each party 103 stores software comprising a respective instance of at least one client application 105 arranged to run on the processing apparatus. It will be understood that any action attributed herein to a given party 103 may be performed using the software run on the processing apparatus of the respective computer equipment 102. The computer equipment 102 of each party 103 comprises at least one user terminal, e.g. a desktop or laptop computer, a tablet, a smartphone, or a wearable device such as a smartwatch. The computer equipment 102 of a given party 103 may also comprise one or more other networked resources, such as cloud computing resources accessed via the user terminal.

The client application 105 may be initially provided to the computer equipment 102 of any given party 103 on suitable computer-readable storage medium or media, e.g. downloaded from a server, or provided on a removable storage device such as a removable SSD, flash

memory key, removable EEPROM, removable magnetic disk drive, magnetic floppy disk or tape, optical disk such as a CD or DVD ROM, or a removable optical drive, etc.

The client application 105 comprises at least a "wallet" function. This has two main functionalities. One of these is to enable the respective party 103 to create, authorise (for example sign) and send transactions 152 to one or more bitcoin nodes 104 to then be propagated throughout the network of blockchain nodes 104 and thereby included in the blockchain 150. The other is to report back to the respective party the amount of the digital asset that he or she currently owns. In an output-based system, this second functionality comprises collating the amounts defined in the outputs of the various 152 transactions scattered throughout the blockchain 150 that belong to the party in question.

Note: whilst the various client functionality may be described as being integrated into a given client application 105, this is not necessarily limiting and instead any client functionality described herein may instead be implemented in a suite of two or more distinct applications, e.g. interfacing via an API, or one being a plug-in to the other. More generally the client functionality could be implemented at the application layer or a lower layer such as the operating system, or any combination of these. The following will be described in terms of a client application 105 but it will be appreciated that this is not limiting.

The instance of the client application or software 105 on each computer equipment 102 is operatively coupled to at least one of the blockchain nodes 104 of the network 106. This enables the wallet function of the client 105 to send transactions 152 to the network 106. The client 105 is also able to contact blockchain nodes 104 in order to query the blockchain 150 for any transactions of which the respective party 103 is the recipient (or indeed inspect other parties' transactions in the blockchain 150, since in embodiments the blockchain 150 is a public facility which provides trust in transactions in part through its public visibility). The wallet function on each computer equipment 102 is configured to formulate and send transactions 152 according to a transaction protocol. As set out above, each blockchain node 104 runs software configured to validate transactions 152 according to the blockchain node protocol, and to forward transactions 152 in order to propagate them throughout the

blockchain network 106. The transaction protocol and the node protocol correspond to one another, and a given transaction protocol goes with a given node protocol, together implementing a given transaction model. The same transaction protocol is used for all transactions 152 in the blockchain 150. The same node protocol is used by all the nodes 104 in the network 106.

When a given party 103, say Alice, wishes to send a new transaction 152j to be included in the blockchain 150, then she formulates the new transaction in accordance with the relevant transaction protocol (using the wallet function in her client application 105). She then sends the transaction 152 from the client application 105 to one or more blockchain nodes 104 to which she is connected. E.g. this could be the blockchain node 104 that is best connected to Alice's computer 102. When any given blockchain node 104 receives a new transaction 152j, it handles it in accordance with the blockchain node protocol and its respective role. This comprises first checking whether the newly received transaction 152j meets a certain condition for being "valid", examples of which will be discussed in more detail shortly. In some transaction protocols, the condition for validation may be configurable on a per-transaction basis by scripts included in the transactions 152. Alternatively the condition could simply be a built-in feature of the node protocol, or be defined by a combination of the script and the node protocol.

On condition that the newly received transaction 152j passes the test for being deemed valid (i.e. on condition that it is "validated"), any blockchain node 104 that receives the transaction 152j will add the new validated transaction 152 to the ordered set of transactions 154 maintained at that blockchain node 104. Further, any blockchain node 104 that receives the transaction 152j will propagate the validated transaction 152 onward to one or more other blockchain nodes 104 in the network 106. Since each blockchain node 104 applies the same protocol, then assuming the transaction 152j is valid, this means it will soon be propagated throughout the whole network 106.

Once admitted to the ordered pool of pending transactions 154 maintained at a given blockchain node 104, that blockchain node 104 will start competing to solve the proof-of-work puzzle on the latest version of their respective pool of 154 including the new

transaction 152 (recall that other blockchain nodes 104 may be trying to solve the puzzle based on a different pool of transactions154, but whoever gets there first will define the set of transactions that are included in the latest block 151. Eventually a blockchain node 104 will solve the puzzle for a part of the ordered pool 154 which includes Alice's transaction 152j). Once the proof-of-work has been done for the pool 154 including the new transaction 152j, it immutably becomes part of one of the blocks 151 in the blockchain 150. Each transaction 152 comprises a pointer back to an earlier transaction, so the order of the transactions is also immutably recorded.

Different blockchain nodes 104 may receive different instances of a given transaction first and therefore have conflicting views of which instance is 'valid' before one instance is published in a new block 151, at which point all blockchain nodes 104 agree that the published instance is the only valid instance. If a blockchain node 104 accepts one instance as valid, and then discovers that a second instance has been recorded in the blockchain 150 then that blockchain node 104 must accept this and will discard (i.e. treat as invalid) the instance which it had initially accepted (i.e. the one that has not been published in a block 151).

An alternative type of transaction protocol operated by some blockchain networks may be referred to as an "account-based" protocol, as part of an account-based transaction model. In the account-based case, each transaction does not define the amount to be transferred by referring back to the UTXO of a preceding transaction in a sequence of past transactions, but rather by reference to an absolute account balance. The current state of all accounts is stored, by the nodes of that network, separate to the blockchain and is updated constantly. In such a system, transactions are ordered using a running transaction tally of the account (also called the "position"). This value is signed by the sender as part of their cryptographic signature and is hashed as part of the transaction reference calculation. In addition, an optional data field may also be signed the transaction. This data field may point back to a previous transaction, for example if the previous transaction ID is included in the data field.

4.2. UTXO-Based Model

Figure 2 illustrates an example transaction protocol. This is an example of a UTXO-based protocol. A transaction 152 (abbreviated "Tx") is the fundamental data structure of the blockchain 150 (each block 151 comprising one or more transactions 152). The following will be described by reference to an output-based or "UTXO" based protocol. However, this is not limiting to all possible embodiments. Note that while the example UTXO-based protocol is described with reference to bitcoin, it may equally be implemented on other example blockchain networks.

In a UTXO-based model, each transaction ("Tx") 152 comprises a data structure comprising one or more inputs 202, and one or more outputs 203. Each output 203 may comprise an unspent transaction output (UTXO), which can be used as the source for the input 202 of another new transaction (if the UTXO has not already been redeemed). The UTXO includes a value specifying an amount of a digital asset. This represents a set number of tokens on the distributed ledger. The UTXO may also contain the transaction ID of the transaction from which it came, amongst other information. The transaction data structure may also comprise a header 201, which may comprise an indicator of the size of the input field(s) 202 and output field(s) 203. The header 201 may also include an ID of the transaction. In embodiments the transaction ID is the hash of the transaction data (excluding the transaction ID itself) and stored in the header 201 of the raw transaction 152 submitted to the nodes 104.

Say Alice 103a wishes to create a transaction 152j transferring an amount of the digital asset in question to Bob 103b. In Figure 2 Alice's new transaction 152j is labelled "Tx_1". It takes an amount of the digital asset that is locked to Alice in the output 203 of a preceding transaction 152i in the sequence, and transfers at least some of this to Bob. The preceding transaction 152i is labelled "Tx_0" in Figure 2. Tx_0 and Tx_1 are just arbitrary labels. They do not necessarily mean that Tx_0 is the first transaction in the blockchain 151, nor that Tx_1 is the immediate next transaction in the pool 154. Tx_1 could point back to any preceding (i.e. antecedent) transaction that still has an unspent output 203 locked to Alice.

The preceding transaction Tx_0 may already have been validated and included in a block 151 of the blockchain 150 at the time when Alice creates her new transaction Tx_1, or at least by

the time she sends it to the network 106. It may already have been included in one of the blocks 151 at that time, or it may be still waiting in the ordered set 154 in which case it will soon be included in a new block 151. Alternatively Tx_0 and Tx_1 could be created and sent to the network 106 together, or Tx_0 could even be sent after Tx_1 if the node protocol allows for buffering "orphan" transactions. The terms "preceding" and "subsequent" as used herein in the context of the sequence of transactions refer to the order of the transactions in the sequence as defined by the transaction pointers specified in the transactions (which transaction points back to which other transaction, and so forth). They could equally be replaced with "predecessor" and "successor", or "antecedent" and "descendant", "parent" and "child", or such like. It does not necessarily imply an order in which they are created, sent to the network 106, or arrive at any given blockchain node 104. Nevertheless, a subsequent transaction (the descendent transaction or "child") which points to a preceding transaction (the antecedent transaction or "parent") will not be validated until and unless the parent transaction is validated. A child that arrives at a blockchain node 104 before its parent is considered an orphan. It may be discarded or buffered for a certain time to wait for the parent, depending on the node protocol and/or node behaviour.

One of the one or more outputs 203 of the preceding transaction Tx_0 comprises a particular UTXO, labelled here $UTXO_0$. Each UTXO comprises a value specifying an amount of the digital asset represented by the UTXO, and a locking script which defines a condition which must be met by an unlocking script in the input 202 of a subsequent transaction in order for the subsequent transaction to be validated, and therefore for the UTXO to be successfully redeemed. Typically the locking script locks the amount to a particular party (the beneficiary of the transaction in which it is included). I.e. the locking script defines an unlocking condition, typically comprising a condition that the unlocking script in the input of the subsequent transaction comprises the cryptographic signature of the party to whom the preceding transaction is locked.

The locking script (aka scriptPubKey) is a piece of code written in the domain specific language recognized by the node protocol. A particular example of such a language is called "Script" (capital S) which is used by the blockchain network. The locking script specifies what information is required to spend a transaction output 203, for example the requirement of

Alice's signature. Unlocking scripts appear in the outputs of transactions. The unlocking script (aka scriptSig) is a piece of code written the domain specific language that provides the information required to satisfy the locking script criteria. For example, it may contain Bob's signature. Unlocking scripts appear in the input 202 of transactions.

So in the example illustrated, $UTXO_0$ in the output 203 of Tx_0 comprises a locking script [Checksig P_A] which requires a signature Sig P_A of Alice in order for $UTXO_0$ to be redeemed (strictly, in order for a subsequent transaction attempting to redeem $UTXO_0$ to be valid). [Checksig P_A] contains a representation (i.e. a hash) of the public key P_A from a public-private key pair of Alice. The input 202 of Tx_1 comprises a pointer pointing back to Tx_1 (e.g. by means of its transaction ID, $TxID_0$, which in embodiments is the hash of the whole transaction Tx_0). The input 202 of Tx_1 comprises an index identifying $UTXO_0$ within Tx_0, to identify it amongst any other possible outputs of Tx_0. The input 202 of Tx_1 further comprises an unlocking script <Sig P_A> which comprises a cryptographic signature of Alice, created by Alice applying her private key from the key pair to a predefined portion of data (sometimes called the "message" in cryptography). The data (or "message") that needs to be signed by Alice to provide a valid signature may be defined by the locking script, or by the node protocol, or by a combination of these.

When the new transaction Tx_1 arrives at a blockchain node 104, the node applies the node protocol. This comprises running the locking script and unlocking script together to check whether the unlocking script meets the condition defined in the locking script (where this condition may comprise one or more criteria). In embodiments this involves concatenating the two scripts:

<Sig P_A> <P_A> || [Checksig P_A]

where "||" represents a concatenation and "<...>" means place the data on the stack, and "[...]" is a function comprised by the locking script (in this example a stack-based language). Equivalently the scripts may be run one after the other, with a common stack, rather than concatenating the scripts. Either way, when run together, the scripts use the public key P_A of Alice, as included in the locking script in the output of Tx_0, to authenticate that the

unlocking script in the input of Tx_1 contains the signature of Alice signing the expected portion of data. The expected portion of data itself (the "message") also needs to be included in order to perform this authentication. In embodiments the signed data comprises the whole of Tx_1 (so a separate element does not need to be included specifying the signed portion of data in the clear, as it is already inherently present).

The details of authentication by public-private cryptography will be familiar to a person skilled in the art. Basically, if Alice has signed a message using her private key, then given Alice's public key and the message in the clear, another entity such as a node 104 is able to authenticate that the message must have been signed by Alice. Signing typically comprises hashing the message, signing the hash, and tagging this onto the message as a signature, thus enabling any holder of the public key to authenticate the signature. Note therefore that any reference herein to signing a particular piece of data or part of a transaction, or such like, can in embodiments mean signing a hash of that piece of data or part of the transaction.

If the unlocking script in Tx_1 meets the one or more conditions specified in the locking script of Tx_0 (so in the example shown, if Alice's signature is provided in Tx_1 and authenticated), then the blockchain node 104 deems Tx_1 valid. This means that the blockchain node 104 will add Tx_1 to the ordered pool of pending transactions 154. The blockchain node 104 will also forward the transaction Tx_1 to one or more other blockchain nodes 104 in the network 106, so that it will be propagated throughout the network 106. Once Tx_1 has been validated and included in the blockchain 150, this defines $UTXO_0$ from Tx_0 as spent. Note that Tx_1 can only be valid if it spends an unspent transaction output 203. If it attempts to spend an output that has already been spent by another transaction 152, then Tx_1 will be invalid even if all the other conditions are met. Hence the blockchain node 104 also needs to check whether the referenced UTXO in the preceding transaction Tx_0 is already spent (i.e. whether it has already formed a valid input to another valid transaction). This is one reason why it is important for the blockchain 150 to impose a defined order on the transactions 152. In practice a given blockchain node 104 may maintain a separate database marking which UTXOs 203 in which transactions 152 have been spent, but ultimately what defines whether

a UTXO has been spent is whether it has already formed a valid input to another valid transaction in the blockchain 150.

If the total amount specified in all the outputs 203 of a given transaction 152 is greater than the total amount pointed to by all its inputs 202, this is another basis for invalidity in most transaction models. Therefore such transactions will not be propagated nor included in a block 151.

Note that in UTXO-based transaction models, a given UTXO needs to be spent as a whole. It cannot "leave behind" a fraction of the amount defined in the UTXO as spent while another fraction is spent. However the amount from the UTXO can be split between multiple outputs of the next transaction. E.g. the amount defined in $UTXO_0$ in Tx_0 can be split between multiple UTXOs in Tx_1. Hence if Alice does not want to give Bob all of the amount defined in $UTXO_0$, she can use the remainder to give herself change in a second output of Tx_1, or pay another party.

In practice Alice will also usually need to include a fee for the bitcoin node 104 that successfully includes her transaction 104 in a block 151. If Alice does not include such a fee, Tx_0 may be rejected by the blockchain nodes 104, and hence although technically valid, may not be propagated and included in the blockchain 150 (the node protocol does not force blockchain nodes 104 to accept transactions 152 if they don't want). In some protocols, the transaction fee does not require its own separate output 203 (i.e. does not need a separate UTXO). Instead any difference between the total amount pointed to by the input(s) 202 and the total amount of specified in the output(s) 203 of a given transaction 152 is automatically given to the blockchain node 104 publishing the transaction. E.g. say a pointer to $UTXO_0$ is the only input to Tx_1, and Tx_1 has only one output $UTXO_1$. If the amount of the digital asset specified in $UTXO_0$ is greater than the amount specified in $UTXO_1$, then the difference may be assigned by the node 104 that wins the proof-of-work race to create the block containing $UTXO_1$. Alternatively or additionally however, it is not necessarily excluded that a transaction fee could be specified explicitly in its own one of the UTXOs 203 of the transaction 152.

Alice and Bob's digital assets consist of the UTXOs locked to them in any transactions 152 anywhere in the blockchain 150. Hence typically, the assets of a given party 103 are scattered throughout the UTXOs of various transactions 152 throughout the blockchain 150. There is no one number stored anywhere in the blockchain 150 that defines the total balance of a given party 103. It is the role of the wallet function in the client application 105 to collate together the values of all the various UTXOs which are locked to the respective party and have not yet been spent in another onward transaction. It can do this by querying the copy of the blockchain 150 as stored at any of the bitcoin nodes 104.

Note that the script code is often represented schematically (i.e. not using the exact language). For example, one may use operation codes (opcodes) to represent a particular function. "OP_..." refers to a particular opcode of the Script language. As an example, OP_RETURN is an opcode of the Script language that when preceded by OP_FALSE at the beginning of a locking script creates an unspendable output of a transaction that can store data within the transaction, and thereby record the data immutably in the blockchain 150. E.g. the data could comprise a document which it is desired to store in the blockchain.

Typically an input of a transaction contains a digital signature corresponding to a public key P_A. In embodiments this is based on the ECDSA using the elliptic curve secp256k1. A digital signature signs a particular piece of data. In some embodiments, for a given transaction the signature will sign part of the transaction input, and some or all of the transaction outputs. The particular parts of the outputs it signs depends on the SIGHASH flag. The SIGHASH flag is usually a 4-byte code included at the end of a signature to select which outputs are signed (and thus fixed at the time of signing).

The locking script is sometimes called "scriptPubKey" referring to the fact that it typically comprises the public key of the party to whom the respective transaction is locked. The unlocking script is sometimes called "scriptSig" referring to the fact that it typically supplies the corresponding signature. However, more generally it is not essential in all applications of a blockchain 150 that the condition for a UTXO to be redeemed comprises authenticating a signature. More generally the scripting language could be used to define any one or more

conditions. Hence the more general terms “locking script” and “unlocking script” may be preferred.

4.3. Side Channel

As shown in Figure 1, the client application on each of Alice and Bob’s computer equipment 102a, 120b, respectively, may comprise additional communication functionality. This additional functionality enables Alice 103a to establish a separate side channel 107 with Bob 103b (at the instigation of either party or a third party). The side channel 107 enables exchange of data separately from the blockchain network. Such communication is sometimes referred to as “off-chain” communication. For instance this may be used to exchange a transaction 152 between Alice and Bob without the transaction (yet) being registered onto the blockchain network 106 or making its way onto the chain 150, until one of the parties chooses to broadcast it to the network 106. Sharing a transaction in this way is sometimes referred to as sharing a “transaction template”. A transaction template may lack one or more inputs and/or outputs that are required in order to form a complete transaction. Alternatively or additionally, the side channel 107 may be used to exchange any other transaction related data, such as keys, negotiated amounts or terms, data content, etc.

The side channel 107 may be established via the same packet-switched network 101 as the blockchain network 106. Alternatively or additionally, the side channel 301 may be established via a different network such as a mobile cellular network, or a local area network such as a local wireless network, or even a direct wired or wireless link between Alice and Bob’s devices 102a, 102b. Generally, the side channel 107 as referred to anywhere herein may comprise any one or more links via one or more networking technologies or communication media for exchanging data “off-chain”, i.e. separately from the blockchain network 106. Where more than one link is used, then the bundle or collection of off-chain links as a whole may be referred to as the side channel 107. Note therefore that if it is said that Alice and Bob exchange certain pieces of information or data, or such like, over the side channel 107, then this does not necessarily imply all these pieces of data have to be send over exactly the same link or even the same type of network.

The side channel 107 may comprise a secure channel employing known secure communications techniques to enable secure, private off-chain communication between parties such as Alice and Bob. For example the secure channel may be based on a shared secret shared between the parties communicating over the secure channel. Such a channel may be used, for example, to communicate between the verifying party 103V and the target party 103T, such as to enable the verifying party 103V to submit a challenge to a PUF 302/500 held by the target party, and to receive back the corresponding response.

5. BLOCKCHAIN BASED PUF IDENTITY ATTESTATION

As mentioned in previous sections, response data serving as a record of a response may be stored on a public blockchain rather than employing a trusted third party system 602. The response data is data determined at set-up, and can later be used by a verifying party 103V ("Bob") to test an assertion of a target's identity by a target party 103T ("Alice"). Note again that Alice and Bob are just arbitrary labels, and Alice and Bob do not necessarily have the same role here as in the general overview of blockchain systems given in section 4 (where Bob was spending the output of a transaction of Alice's).

As discussed previously, the response data for a given CR pair {Ci, Ri} (whether stored on chain or elsewhere) may comprise any of the following, as determined in the set-up phase 702 and stored for future reference by the verifying party 103V:

i) an explicit value (either in the clear or encrypted) of the challenge Ci and/or response Ri, or

ii) an explicit value of the response Ri linked to a master challenge Cm from which the particular challenge Ci for the respective response Ri can be derived, or

iii) an attestation (e.g. hash or double hash) of the response Ri together with an explicit value of the challenge Ci, or

iv) an attestation (e.g. hash or double hash) of the response Ri linked to a master challenge Cm from which the particular challenge for the respective response Ri can be derived, or

v) a public key of a public-private key pair derived from the response Ri.

As shown in Figure 9, whatever form it takes, in the set-up phase 702 such response data 901 can be stored in the output 203 of a transaction 152S recorded on a blockchain 150. This may be referred to in the following as a storage transaction. It may be recorded on chain for example using the techniques discussed in section 4 above, noting again that Alice in that section is not necessarily the target party 103T and Bob in that section is not necessarily the verifying party 103V – in fact the target party 103T, now referred to as Alice, may be the one who formulates and sends off the storage transaction 152S to be recorded on chain. As another example, the trusted third party may formulate a template of the storage transaction for target party 103T to complete by including the response data 901 generated at set-up, and then forward to be recorded on chain. The target part 103T may send the storage transaction 152S directly to one of the blockchain nodes 104 to be propagated through the blockchain network 106, or may send it indirectly via another party such as the trusted third party. As yet another example, the target party 103T may send his/her response data 901 to the trusted third party, for the trusted third party to formulate into the storage transaction 152 and send off to be recorded on chain.

The response data 901 may be stored in an unspendable output of the storage transaction 152S. E.g. this may be made unspendable by means of an OP_RETURN, or an OP_FALSE followed by an OP_RETURN, if using the Script protocol (in some blockchain protocols like BTC or BCH, any inclusion of OP_RETURN makes an output unspendable, whereas in others like BSV, both OP_FALSE and OP_RETURN are required to make an output unspendable). BTC (Bitcoin), BTC (Bitcoin Cash), and BSV (Bitcoin Satoshi Vision) are different example implementations of the blockchain system described earlier.

Alternatively the response data 901 may be embedded in a spendable output of the storage transaction 152S. E.g. this could be kept spendable by including an OP_RETURN without OP_FALSE. As another example, one can embed data in a spendable locking script by including it immediately before an OP_DROP code. This would apply equally to BTC, BCH and BSV.

In embodiments the response data 901 of a set of multiple different CR pairs {Ci, Ri} of a given target party 103T may be stored. These may be stored in the same output 203 or different outputs 203 of the storage transaction 152, or a combination of some in the same output and some in different outputs. They may be stored in the same storage transaction 152S, or the response data 901 of different CR pairs may be stored in different storage transactions 152S, or a combination of some in the same transaction and some in different transactions.

Note that the on-chain storage is not necessarily limited to an account-based model. In alternative deployments, the response data 901 could be stored in one or more smart contracts of one or more transactions of an account-based model.

In the verification phase 704, when the verifying party 103V wishes to verify the identity of the target, then he/she accesses the blockchain 150, in order to obtain the response data 901 corresponding to one a particular CR pair from a storage transaction 152S. In embodiments this gives the verifying party 103V the response Ri corresponding to a particular challenge Ci, or the attestation (e.g. hash or double hash) of that response Ri. The verifying party 103V also submits the challenge Ci to the target party 103V, and in response receives back the (purported) response R'i which the target party 103T (or their device) generates by inputting the received challenge Ci to the PUF module 603. The verifying party 103V then compares the returned response R'i with the version retrieved from the storage transaction 152S on chain, or applies the same transformation (e.g. H(R'i) or H^2(R'i)) to the received response that was used for the attestation and compares this with the attestation that was retrieved from the storage transaction 152S on chain. Either way, if the comparison gives a match, the target is verified.

The verifying party 103V may access the blockchain 150 via one of the nodes 104 of the blockchain network 106, or alternatively by obtaining the response data from any external party, who may also provide a Merkle proof of inclusion of that data (i.e. the transaction) in the blockchain.

In embodiments where the response data 901 is stored on a public medium such as a blockchain 150, it may be desirable that the actual response value Ri itself is not disclosed publicly or unrestrictedly. Otherwise any malicious party can view the Ri on chain and then pretend to be the target party 103T if challenged with Ci. Instead therefore, it may be preferred to store only the attestation of Ri (e.g. H(Ri) or H^2(Ri)) as the response data 901 held on chain, or else to store the explicit value of Ri but in encrypted form. Or in some cases the attestation could be stored on chain in encrypted form.

In the case where there are potentially multiple verifying parties, storing Ri or the attestation thereof in encrypted form enables the target party 103T or trusted third party to control which verifying parties 103V are able to obtain the storage data 901 corresponding to which of CR pairs. This may be achieved by only giving the decryption key for a certain piece of response data 901 to a given verifying party, and giving the decryption key for another piece of response data 901 only to another verifying party. The distribution of the decryption keys could be administered by the target party 103T or the trusted third party. Each verifying party or subset of verifying parties is given their own subset of one or more decryption keys for accessing a respective subset of the pieces of response data 901 (e.g. CR pairs). Preferably the subsets are exclusive of one another. However in other implementations they could overlap (e.g. different groups within the same organization could have access to overlapping subsets of CR pairs).

As a variant of this if response data 901 (e.g. CR pairs) are stored in a third party system 602 instead of on-chain, then instead of (or as well as) distributing decryption keys, other means may be employed to ensure each verifying party only gets access to their own subset of CR pairs (or more generally response data). E.g. the trusted third party system 602 may maintain a password protected account for each verifying party, which they are required to log into to gain access to their challenge(s) and which only gives them access to their own CR pair(s).

Such schemes may be advantageous for security. If a response Ri of a given CR pair is to be disclosed to one verifying party 103V, it may be desirable that the same CR pair is not used for another verifying party 103V. Otherwise the first verifying party 103V could use the

now-known response Ri to pretend to another verifying party that he/she is the target party 103T. However, taking steps to prevent this is not essential if all the potential verifying parties 103V with access to the response data 901 are trusted.

In further variants, the response data 901 stored on chain could take the form of a public key of the target party 103T, being a public key of a public-private key pair generated at set-up based on a corresponding response Ri (e.g. using it as a seed). In this case the verifying party 103V accesses the public key from the storage transaction 152S and uses it to verify a message signed by the target party 103T with the corresponding private key. In some cases the public keys could be stored on chain in encrypted form so that different public keys can be allocated for use by different verifying parties 103V.

As also shown in Figure 9, in embodiments that employ an output (e.g. UTXO-based) model, then this may be exploited to provide an efficient mechanism for managing CR pairs (or keys derived therefrom). Managing here may comprise updating or revoking a CR pair or key, e.g. once it has already been consumed (used in a verification).

To do this, a new modifier transaction 152M is recorded on the blockchain 150. It has an input 202 which points to one of the outputs 203 of the storage transaction 152S in which the piece of response data 901 to be revoked or updated is stored. This may be referred to as “spending”, “redeeming” or “assigning” that output (though note that this does not necessarily imply the transfer of monetary value). This is understood at the level of a layer-2 protocol recognized by the verifying party 103V to mean that the response data 901 in the pointed-to storage transaction 152S or output 203 is no longer to be used. If the modifier transaction 152M itself contains response data 901’ in one of its own outputs, this is taken to represent that the new response data 901’ represents replacement of the previous response data 901 (e.g. a new CR pair). If the verifying party accesses the blockchain 150 to find response data to use in a verification operation, it will use the updated version 901’ rather than the replaced version. If on the other hand the modifier transaction 152U does not contain replacement response data 901, then it is taken to simply revoke the response data 901 in the storage transaction 152S or output 203 to which it points.

In some embodiments, the response data 901 is embedded in a spendable output of the storage transaction 152S, and may be revoked or updated by spending (i.e. assigning or redeeming) the particular output 203 in which the response data 901 (e.g. CR pair) is stored. In some such embodiments, different pieces of response data 901 corresponding to different CR pairs may be stored in individual outputs 203 of the same storage transaction 203 and individually evoked or updated.

In other embodiments, the response data 901 is stored in an unspendable output of the storage transaction 152S, and may be revoked or updated by spending (i.e. assigning or redeeming) a different, spendable output of the storage transaction 152S. In some such embodiments, multiple pieces of storage data 901 corresponding to multiple different CR pairs (stored in the same or different unspendable outputs) may be revoked or updated by spending the same spendable output of the same transaction 152S.

As an example use case, the record of a piece of response data 901, corresponding to a CR pair, may be revoked or updated once it has been consumed, i.e. used in a verification. This could apply whether the response data 901 is an explicit record of Ri, or an attestation, or a public key derived from Ri. Either way, this may be advantageous for security reasons, so that response data which has now been released into the world is no longer usable again.

The modifier transaction 152M could be formulated and sent to be recorded on chain by the target party 103T. It could be sent either directly to a blockchain node 104 to propagate, or indirectly to a node 104 via an intermediate party. Alternatively the trusted third party may send a template transaction for the target party to complete (e.g. by signing and/or adding replacement response data 901') and then forward on to a node 104, either directly or indirectly, to be recorded on chain. As another possibility, the trusted third party could formulate the modifier transaction 152M (possibly based on a template or some data sent from the target part 103T, e.g. comprising replacement response data 901'), and then the trusted third party may send the modifier transaction 152M to a node 104 to be recorded on chain. Note that all of these options may also apply to the way in which the storage transaction 152S is recorded on the blockchain 150 as well.

According to the various concepts discussed above, there is thus provided a system for i) linking an identity (or other related information, such as a public key) to a UTXO, and using the spend-state of this UTXO as a proxy for the validity of the identity credentials; and ii) establishing a set of transactions to perform efficient identity-management operations, such as setup, revocation, update and verification. The process is more efficient in that the number of communications is reduced, as all parties can consult the blockchain to see when CRPs are consumed or identities revoked, rather than all parties needing to communicate with each other all the time.

Such techniques may be used for example to extend the framework for linking identity to PUF devices, as presented previously, by minimising the reliance on a third-party KYC (know your customer) provider for handling CRP data used in verification. This goal may be achieved by partially replacing the role, or rather some of the functions, of a KYC provider with a public blockchain, whereby a user may instantiate their own identity credentials, related to an ePUF device, independently of any third party.

The role of the trusted-third party in an identity system is not necessarily eschewed completely, but either way, the process of identity management may be improved such that their involvement in the process, and related burden placed on them, is at least reduced.

5.1. Linking PUF Identity to a UTXO Set

The first aspect whereby the use of a blockchain can improve on the identity systems, such as those discussed in previous sections, is by using the *unspent transaction output set (UTXO set)* of a public blockchain to manage CRPs relating to a PUF identity.

In this section, two distinct example mechanisms are disclosed for mapping CRPs to members of the UTXO set, and using their status as 'spent' or 'unspent' state as an indication of whether each particular CRP has been consumed in an identity verification process. The first mechanism involves *embedding* CRP data in spendable UTXOs, and the second involves *pairing* them to spendable UTXOs. In either case, additional data related to the CRPs, or the identity in question, may also be optionally included in the system.

5.1.1. Embedding in spendable UTXOs: The first mechanism is to bind CRPs to spendable UTXOs, which are transaction outputs containing scripts whose conditions can be satisfied by future inputs, and therefore can be consumed by future spending transactions. There are many different options for implementing such an embedding, but for our purposes this will generally consist at least of the following locking script:

[Checksig P] OP_RETURN <Rep(C, R)>

where [Checksig P] is a standard pay-to-public-key-hash (P2PKH) locking script, and Rep(C, R) is a representation of a particular challenge-response pair (C, R).

This locking script can be unlocked simply by providing a valid signature $Sig\ P$ over a spending transaction, where the signature is considered valid against the public key P. It should be noted that any data that follows the opcode OP_RETURN will not be considered when validating a spending transaction, and therefore this data may be treated as arbitrary and unformatted with respect to blockchain validators.

The data following the OP_RETURN code in the script above is a representation Rep(C, R) of the challenge-response pair (C, R). This representation could be made in various ways, depending on the use case in question. However, a sensible example would be to encrypt the CRP using a key k known only to the prover Alice who owns the PUF. In this case, we could have any of the following representations:

$$\text{Rep}(C, R) = \text{Encrypt}(C, k),$$
$$\text{Rep}(C, R) = \text{Encrypt}(R, k),$$
$$\text{Rep}(C, R) = \text{Encrypt}(C \parallel R, k).$$

These representations would allow Alice to retrieve or prove, at a later time, either the challenge, response, or CRP respectively that was included in her UTXO.

Additional script encumbrances: It is possible to extend the basic locking script shown previously to include additional conditions on the input script that spends the output in the future. A sensible example of such an extra condition would be the following script:

[Checksig P][Hash Puzzle $H^2(R)$] OP_RETURN <Rep(C, R)>

where [Hash Puzzle $H^2(R)$]= OP_HASH160 <$H(R)$> OP_EQUAL. Note that other hash function opcodes may be used. This modified script now requires the spender to reveal the hash of the challenge R in addition to providing a valid signature for the public key P. The idea here is that, in some scenarios, this can be used a knowledge proof that the spender knows the information $H(R)$ that is in turn related to the challenge in question R.

Transaction models: Given that the exact structure of the transaction locking scripts to be used has been decided, the choice can then be made as to how to structure transactions containing these scripts as a way to attest store, attest to and manage CRPs.

It is disclosed herein to map CRPs, and the associated locking scripts, to UTXOs in a one-to-one manner. In other words, every UTXO containing such a script will correspond to exactly one CRP relating to a particular PUF device.

There are then a few options as to how to organise these UTXOs into transactions. The most likely possible options are as follows:

1. One CRP per transaction.
2. One CRP set per transaction.
3. One PUF per transaction.

The first option may be applicable in some cases, such as for PUFs that are very infrequently used, such as for updating a will, and has the benefit that multiple CRPs are not obviously linked with one another. This may be useful also in situations where extreme privacy is required, as the consumption and revelation of one CRP can be revealed independently of any others.

The transaction in Table 1 below is an example implementation of the first option. It can be seen that the transaction comprises only a single input and output, and therefore each CRP will be contained in different transaction. When its output is spent, the relevance of this transaction to the identity system is effectively ended, other than for auditing purposes.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{CRP-Single}}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}}$	$< \mathrm{SIG}_A > < P_A >$	x BSV	[Checksig P_A^1] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_1, R_1)>

Table 1: single CRP mapped to a UTXO in single transaction.

The second option, whereby many CRPs are each mapped to respective UTXOs in a single transaction, may be more desirable for a use case such as bank cards where the expected frequency of CRP-consumption is considerably higher. The transaction in Table 2 below shows how this can be achieved.

Note that the input signature, which would likely have been generated by Alice, can be made to sign over the entire set of outputs. This provides a one-to-many linkage from one public key P_A to many UTXOs, and hence many CRPs, whilst maintaining a one-to-one mapping of UTXOs to distinct CRPs themselves. It is also assumed that each output/CRP has its own associated public key (all owned by Alice) to avoid reuse.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{CRP-Set}}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}}$	$< \mathrm{SIG}_A > < P_A >$	x BSV	[Checksig P_A^1] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_1, R_1)>
		x BSV	[Checksig P_A^2] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_2, R_2)>
		x BSV	[Checksig P_A^3] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_3, R_3)>
		...	

	x BSV	[Checksig P_A^n] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_n, R_n)>

Table 2: a set of CRPs mapped to respective UTXOs of a single transaction

The option shown above can also be integrated well with embodiments that update CRP sets over time, where each time an updated set is generated, a new transaction can be issued for that set. In addition, one can also generate and issue multiple different CRP sets for the same PUF at the same time, via parallel independent (i.e. not related on-chain) transactions. This may be useful for establishing identity with multiple different trusted-third parties (e.g. different banks) such that the identities are both independently established but are still anchored by the same PUF.

The third option, wherein a single transaction is used to represent a single PUF, is simply a more restrictive version of option 2, where updates are not possible. This may be applicable for cases where a PUF-containing device is given a particular 'lifespan', where it can only be used for a pre-determined number of authentications before a user is issued with a new device.

5.1.2. Pairing with spendable UTXOs

An alternative to embedding CRPs within spendable UTXOs is to simply *pair* them with these outputs. In this case, a difference from the existing work on digital certificates is that the transaction may be constructed and signed by Alice, as she may wish to attest to an identity independently of any third-party.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{CRP-Set}}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}}$	$< SIG_A > < P_A >$	x BSV	OP_DUP OP_HASH160 $< P_A^1 >$ OP_EQUALVERIFY OP_CHECKSIG
		0 BSV	OP_0 OP_RETURN <Rep(C_1, R_1)>

	x BSV	OP_DUP OP_HASH160 < P_A^2 > OP_EQUALVERIFY OP_CHECKSIG
	0 BSV	OP_0 OP_RETURN <Rep(C_2, R_2)>
	...	
	x BSV	OP_DUP OP_HASH160 < P_A^n > OP_EQUALVERIFY OP_CHECKSIG
	0 BSV	OP_0 OP_RETURN <Rep(C_n, R_n)>

Table 3: A transaction containing spendable UTXOs mapped to CRPs.

In the diagram above can be seen an example transaction containing $2n$ outputs relating to n CRPs, whereby each spendable output can be mapped to one of the CRPs, and the CRP representation itself has been included in a corresponding unspendable output (e.g. OP_FALSE OP_RETURN). It should also be noted that the three possible variants for organising the CRPs into transactions and UTXOs apply similarly here.

5.1.3. Discussion

Benefits to CRP-management: the concept of mapping CRPs to UTXOs can significantly improve CRP management and handling for users of the identity protocols from the previous sections. An advantage is that one can partly offload the storage and lookup of CRPs to the blockchain network 106, and service providers who can facilitate reliable retrieval from it.

By mapping all of the 'live' CRPs of a particular PUF to UTXOs, it is possible to improve the CRP update process by querying the state of the UTXO set for accurate information about the CRPs currently available to a given PUF in an identity system.

An example of a simple process utilising the blockchain and the UTXO-CRP mapping conventions we have described is as follows:

1. Alice obtains a PUF device and enumerates a set of CRPs as $(C_1, R_1), (C_2, R_2), \ldots, (C_n, R_n)$.

2. Alice generates a transaction $TxID_{CRP-Set}$ as shown in Table 2 and broadcasts to the blockchain network.
3. Alice consumes multiple CRPs over time to authenticate her identity with a third party.
4. Alice now wishes to check if she has enough CRPs to cover her expected activities for the coming week:
    1. Alice queries a blockchain node 104, or SPV-like service provider, asking which UTXOs of $TxID_{CRP-Set}$ are currently unspent.
    2. The blockchain node or service provider responds with the number of outputs of the transaction $TxID_{CRP-Set}$ that are still unspent.
5. If the returned number is insufficient, Alice can perform an identity update process with her trusted-third party, or simply enumerate more CRPs for independently-established identity. Otherwise, Alice takes no action.

Embedding versus pairing: the choice of whether to embed CRPs within spendable outputs or to simply pair them with the outputs gives Alice the choice between two different benefits that distinguish these cases.

If the CRPs are embedded within spendable outputs, this incentivises the blockchain nodes 104, who maintain the blockchain network 106, to keep the data of these outputs readily available. This means that the responses to Alice's queries may be faster and, more crucially, the blockchain nodes are more likely to be able to serve the raw data of these transaction outputs back to Alice.

If, as previously discussed, the representation Rep(C, R) of the CRP is included such that it contains the raw (or obfuscated) data of a challenge, response or both, then this means Alice will be able to retrieve the relevant information from the blockchain network 106. This allows Alice to replace local storage, and operate a more *lightweight* system with the blockchain 150, as the embedding of the data in spendable outputs increases the likelihood that her data will have high *availability* regardless.

By contrast, if the CRPs are only *paired* with spendable outputs, then Alice may only be able to determine how many CRPs are available to her, but not necessarily retrieve the representation data itself from Bitcoin nodes. This may mean that Alice has to consult an agent outside of the blockchain node network 106 if she does not maintain her CRP set locally.

Using double-hashes: in the example implementations above, it is shown that the double-hash $H^2(Data)$ can be used as an on-chain representation of some $Data$. The reason for using the double-hash in this manner is that it allows the single-hash to also be revealed on-chain, acting in principle like a knowledge proof that a party knows $H(Data)$, which is in turn connected to the $Data$.

This may be useful for example in a PUF-identity situation where $H^2(R)$ is recorded on-chain by Alice as a spending encumbrance that can be satisfied by a third-party providing $H(R)$, given that Alice has shared the actual value of R with them.

Multi-party signing: it is also plausible that the transactions detailed in this section may include more signatures, from multiple different parties, to aid in Alice's attestation of the PUF identity. For example, it may desirable for both Alice and a third-party identity provider to sign the input(s) of the CRP transactions as a method to improve the trust of a verifier in Alice's identity. This is particularly relevant if the counter-signer is certificate authority that can attest to Alice's public key(s) used for signing blockchain transactions. Multiple parties may be included the signing process for example by means of threshold signatures or key-splitting techniques (e.g. Shamir Secret Sharing), as an alternative to just multiple signatures (i.e. 'multi-sig').

5.2. Efficient identity-management using transactions

An additional way in which a blockchain may be used in conjunction with PUF-based identity systems, such as those presented previously, is as an efficient means to revoke an identity key or token secured by a PUF device.

In prior work done on digital certificate management, it is known to issue and revoke certificates on-chain, and a corresponding certificate verification process accompanies this. Consider a scenario whereby Alice is happy to cooperate with a certificate authority when attesting to her PUF-based identity on-chain. The process for Alice to register a certificate for her identity on-chain is as follows:

1. The certificate authority (CA) verifies the identity of Alice.
2. The CA creates the certificate transaction. This transaction has the following inputs and outputs:
    a. Input: CA's UTXO with an unlocking script containing CA's signature and public key.
    b. Output 1: a P2PKH locking script.
    c. Output 2: an OP_RETURN output containing Alice's public key.
3. The transaction is broadcast, and once it is mined, the CA provides Alice with the transaction ID $TXID_{CTX-PK_A}$.

This process culminates in Alice and the certificate authority cooperating to produce a transaction which signed by the CA, contains one unspendable output including a certificate on Alice's public key, and a spendable output paired to the certificate that the CA can use to revoke the certificate.

Embodiments disclosed herein use a hybrid of the method outlined for the digital certificates above and a method of establishing PUF-based identity, such as one of the methods described earlier. An element added to the PUF identity system here is for the generic trusted third-party (analogous to the CA), to be able to 'revoke' a CRP, or a related public key, by spending a UTXO.

The case where the trusted third-party revokes a certificate on Alice's public key relates to the cryptographic identity establishment discussed earlier.

In the case of CR-pairs (CRPs) stored or attested to on chain, embodiments disclosed herein provide a scheme that allows for the trusted third-party to revoke CRPs once they are used in an authentication process. An example method is as follows:

1. Alice and the trusted third-party conduct an identity setup protocol (e.g. as described earlier).
2. Alice and the trusted third-party now wish to use the blockchain for management of the CRPs generated in 1, or that are now obtainable after step 1:
    a. Alice creates a CRP mapping transaction $TxID_{CRP-Set}$ which maps the CRPs to transaction outputs. This is shown in Table 4 below.
    b. Alice and the trusted third-party both sign $TxID_{CRP-Set}$
3. The CRP mapping transaction $TxID_{CRP-Set}$ is broadcast and published in a blockchain block.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{CRP-Set}}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}}$	$< \mathrm{SIG}_A >< P_A >$ $< \mathrm{SIG}_{TTP} >< P_{TTP} >$	x BSV	[Checksig P_{TTP}] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_1, R_1)>
		x BSV	[Checksig P_{TTP}] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_2, R_2)>
		x BSV	[Checksig P_{TTP}] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_3, R_3)>
		...	
		x BSV	[Checksig P_{TTP}] OP_RETURN <Rep(C_n, R_n)>

Table 4: a *CRP mapping transaction allowing CRP revocation/consumption by the trusted third-party.*

The mapping transaction created in this process is shown in Table 4 above. This is very similar to the CRP mapping transaction shown previously in Table 2, with a difference that both the trusted third party and Alice sign the input, and that each of the UTXOs mapped to the CRPs can be revoked by the trusted third-party by spending in a future transaction.

This is advantageous as it allows for the revocation of CRPs to be handled without direct communication, and the TTP may perform revocation on the user's behalf, which further

reduces the burden on Alice in the system and allows her identity management to become even more lightweight.

6. AUTHENTICATABLE COMPUTATIONS

The present disclosure provides a system and method, and corresponding software, for enabling verification of the identity of a target party who purports to have performed a computation, such as in a distributed computing scenario.

Figure 10 shows a method that may be performed by the target party 103T (also referred to later as the "worker"), using computer equipment 102T of that party, to perform a computation in a manner that enables authentication of the result of the computation. Authentication a result of a computation herein means verifying an identity of the target party that purports to have performed the computation.

At step 1010, the target party 103T obtains at least a private key of a public-private key pair derived from a response generated by a PUF module 603. The PUF module 603 may comprise just a PUF 302, or an expanded PUF-based function comprising a PUF 302 such as an ePUF 501 as discussed previously. Either way, the response is generated by the PUF module 603 using the PUF 301, in dependence on a corresponding challenge input to the PUF module. The public-private key pair comprises the private key and a corresponding public key, which can be used to verify a signature that was created by signing a message with the private key.

In embodiments, the target party obtains both the public and private key, e.g. because the key pair is generated at the target party's computer equipment 102T, or it is generated by a third party (e.g. the third party system 602 mentioned earlier) and sent to the target party 103T.

The public key is made available to a verifying party 103V. There are a number of ways in which this may be implemented. For instance, in embodiments the public key may be stored in a public key storage medium accessible by the verifying party 103V. E.g. the data storage

medium in question may be implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites. This could be the data store 601 in the third party equipment 602 mentioned earlier, or a separate system of the same or a different third party. As another example, the data storage medium via which the public key is made available to the verifying party may 103V comprise a peer-to-peer publication medium such as a blockchain, which could be the same blockchain 150 as that mentioned earlier or a different one. The public key may be stored in the public key storage medium by the target party 103T or a trusted third party (e.g. operator of the third-party system 602) acting on behalf of the target party 103T. In the case of a blockchain, "storing" may means sending to be stored by a node 104.

In other alternatives, the public key may be sent directly to the verifying party 103V, e.g. by being transmitted to the verifying party 103V over a network such as the Internet or a mobile cellular network. The public key may be sent to the verifying party 103V by the target party 103V, or again by a third party (e.g. the operator of the system 602) acting on behalf of the target party.

The obtaining of the public key may be performed, and the public key made available to the verifying party, in a set-up phase prior to the target party receiving the computation request. This may be the set-up phase 702 described earlier, in the cases where the response generated by the PUF module 603 is used to generate a key pair.

The PUF module 603 may be under the control (e.g. in possession) of a trusted third party (e.g. the operator of the third-party system 602 discussed earlier), who generates the public-private key pair for the target party 103T and sends at least the public key to the target party 103T (e.g. over a network such as the Internet or a mobile cellular network, or by physically sending a dongle or such like).

As a variant of this, said obtaining of the public key may comprise: the target party 103T receiving the response R from the trusted third party, who has input the challenge into the PUF module 603 to generate the response on behalf of the target party 103; and then the

target party 103T generating of the public-private key at the target party's equipment 102T based on the response as received from the trusted third party.

The third party in question could be the same third party makes the private key available to the target party 103T, or a different third party.

Or as another option, the PUF module 603 may be under control of (e.g. in possession of) the issuing party or verifying party 103V who may input the challenge to the PUF module 603 to generate the response. The issuing or verifying party may derive the public-private key pair and send the public key to the target party 103T, or may send the response to the target party 103T for the target party 103T to derive the public-private key pair.

In further alternative implementations, the PUF module 603 may be under the control of (e.g. in possession of) the target party 103T who generates the public-private key pair him/herself. In this case said obtaining of the public key comprises: the target party 103T performing the inputting of the challenge to the PUF module 603 himself, in order to generate the response and derive the public private key pair locally.

In some such embodiments, the target party's computer equipment 102T may take the form of a self-contained target device. The PUF module 603 may be incorporated in a same housing as the target device 102T, or the PUF module 603 may be implemented in an external peripheral connected to the target device 102T by a cable but not a network.

At step 1020, the target party 103T receives a computation request from an issuing party (e.g. the party commissioning the computation in a pay-per-computation system). The issuing party may be the verifying party 103V, or a different party on behalf of whom the verifying party 103V is acting. The issuing party pay also be referred to later as the outsourcer.

To receive the computation request, in embodiments the target party 103T may have to access an electronic advertisement medium to actively poll for advertised requests. The advertisement medium could be implemented in third party server equipment, e.g. the data

store 601 of the third party equipment 602 described earlier; or it could be a peer-to-peer publication medium such as a blockchain (e.g. the blockchain 150 described earlier). The electronic advertisement medium could be the same storage medium as that used to store and make available the public and/or private keys to the verifying and target parties 103V, 103T respectively, or it could be a different medium.

In another variant, the issuing party may push the computation request to the target party 103T without the target party having to poll an advertisement medium. E.g. the issuing party may broadcast requests to multiple potential workers including the target party 103T, or may send a targeted request specifically to the target party 103T.

By whatever means the computation request is received, in embodiments the target party 103T may send back an acknowledgement to the issuing party to confirm that the target party 103T has accepted the request and will perform the requested computation.

At step 1030 the target party 103T (on his his/her computer equipment 102T) performs the computation specified in the computation request. This could be practically any computation as required by the application in question, e.g. to search for extra terrestrial life, or for a solution to a complex mathematical problem, or for a treatment for a medical condition such as cancer, etc. The computation could be part of a wider distributed computing application, in which the target computer equipment 102T is just one of multiple pieces of computer equipment of multiple different parties involved in a wider computation of which the requested computation is a constituent part.

At step 1040 the target party 103T signs a message which comprises a result of the computation. The message is signed with the afore-mentioned private key. In some embodiments the signed message may also comprise additional information, e.g. a time stamp indicating a time at which the computation was performed (e.g. at which completed). In embodiments the signed message may comprise part or all of a blockchain transaction which is to be recorded on a blockchain 150.

The signing of the message comprises inputting the message and the private key into a cryptographic signing algorithm, which generates a signature based on the message and private key. This is sometimes referred to as signing "over" the message. Various examples of such algorithms are, in themselves, known in the art. The signature is then tagged onto the message to form the signed version of the message.

In embodiments, the target party 103T may encrypt the result of the computation. This may comprise encrypting only the computation result or the whole message (if the message comprises more than just the result). The encryption may be applied before or after the signing. Either way, the encryption is performed using an encryption key and requires a corresponding decryption key to decrypt. Various suitable encryption algorithms are, in themselves, known in the art. The decryption key may be a key of symmetric encryption key whereby the encryption key and decryption key are the same key (e.g. AES), or a decryption key of an asymmetric scheme whereby the encryption and decryption key are different (e.g. RSA)

In such embodiments the decryption key is made available to the verifying party 103V and/or issuing party, either from the target party 103T or a third party (e.g. the operator of the third-party system 602). In the latter case this could be the same or a different third party as that which performs any other third-party operations of the disclosed method. The decryption key may be made available to the verifying party 103V and/or issuing party via a decryption key storage medium (e.g. third party server, or peer-to-peer medium such as a blockchain), or it may be sent directly to the verifying party 103V. In the former case this could be the same or a different medium as/than used for the private key, public key and/or advertisement.

In embodiments the verifying party and/or issuing party may be the only party or parties who have access to the decryption key. Alternatively they may be a member or members of a restricted group of parties with the decryption key.

In embodiments, the symmetric encryption/decryption key or asymmetric key pair may be derived by inputting another challenge into the PUF module 603 (a different challenge than

used to generate the key used for signing). This may be performed by the target party 103T, verifying party 103V, issuing party or a trusted third party.

At step 1050, the signed message is output to be made available to the verifying party 103V (and in embodiments also the issuing party, who may be the same or a different party). There are a number of possible mechanisms for doing this. In embodiments the target party 103T may simply transmit the signed message directly to the verifying party 103V (and optionally also the issuing party if a different party), e.g. over a network such as the Internet or a mobile cellular network. Alternatively the target party 103V may store (or cause to be stored) the signed message in a data storage medium that is accessible to the verifying party 103V (and optionally also the issuing party if a different party). This data storage medium could be implemented in third party server equipment (comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites), e.g. the data store 601 of the third-party system 602 described earlier. Or the data storage medium used to convey the signed message could be a public peer-to-peer medium such as a blockchain, e.g. the blockchain 150 described earlier. Either way, this could be the same storage medium as used to convey any of the advertisement, public key and/or encryption key, or a different medium. In the case of a blockchain, "storing" may mean sending to be stored on the blockchain, either by sending directly to a node 104 of the blockchain network 106 or via one or more intermediate parties which forward on to a node.

Note also that if the verifying party 103V and issuing party (the party that issued the request for computation) are different parties, then the means of communicating the signed message or computation result to the issuing party need not necessarily be the same as that used to communicate the signed message to the verifying party. Or the verifying party 103V may forward the signed message or computation result to the issuing party, or vice versa. In yet further variants, the target party 103T could send the signed message or computation result to yet another, consuming party who is a consumer of the computation result.

By whatever means the verifying party 103V obtains the signed message and public key, the verifying party 103V can then authenticate the signed message using the public key (i.e. verify the identity of the signer by testing that the message was signed with the private key

corresponding to the public key in question). Various suitable signature authentication algorithms for doing this are, in themselves, known in the art. In embodiments, the verifying party may cause a payment to the target party to be released on condition of the authentication (i.e. on condition of verifying that the message was signed by the target party 103T). As another alternative or additional example, the verifying party 103 may only forward the computation result to the issuing or consuming party, or may only include it in a set of vetted responses, on condition of the authentication.

In one particular embodiment, the target party 103T communicates the signed message to the verifying party 103V by including it in a template blockchain transaction, and sending the template transaction to the verifying party 103V. The message that is signed could comprise part or all of the template transaction. E.g. the computation result may be included in a payload of the target transaction and then the target party 103T signs the template transaction, or the message may be something smaller (e.g. just the computation result, or the result and time stamp) that is signed and included in a payload of the template transaction. Either way, when the verifying party 103V receives this, then he/she verifies the signature, and on condition thereof, completes the template transaction and forwards it to be recorded on the blockchain 150. Completing the transaction may comprise at least adding a signature of the verifying party 103V. The verifying party 103V may send the complete transaction directly to a node 104 of the blockchain network, or via one or more intermediate parties who forward on to the blockchain network 106.

Note: although the above has been described in terms of an asymmetric public-private key pair, this is not limiting. More generally any reference herein to a public key and a private key may be generalized to a cryptographic key of any asymmetric or symmetric authentication scheme. In the case of signing, the “public key” could comprise a public key of an asymmetric public-private key pair or a key of a symmetric authentication scheme; and in the case of verifying the signature, the “private key” could comprise the corresponding private key of the asymmetric public-private key pair or the same key of the symmetric scheme, respectively.

The 'key-pair' used for signing should be broadened to 'cryptographic key' to allow for asymmetric and symmetric signature schemes.

In embodiments the described techniques could be used for outsourced computation. For instance, the concept of *edge computing*, where computational tasks requiring significant computational resources are delegated and distributed amongst many *worker* entities, is in itself well-known in the context of distributed networks and systems. This is also often termed '*grid computing*' or '*fog computing*' in the literature.

It is also common for this type of outsourced computation to be distributed amongst the worker entities on a pay-per-computation basis, so as to compensate the workers for contributing their computational resources to tasks. The introduction of payments from the *outsourcer* into outsourced computation presents two challenges:

1. Malicious workers may attempt to submit incorrect computations to reap profit; and
2. Malicious outsources may neglect to pay honest workers for correct computations.

There have been various schemes proposed to tackle these problems but many are limited to a specific type of computational task. In addition, the use of blockchain based payment systems to deliver the payments has been proposed in previous works.

In embodiments disclosed herein, there are provided techniques that use a blockchain 150 as a substrate for mediating such outsourced computations, where the use of PUF devices is introduced as a means to tie device identity to the computations being performed. The intention here is to add evidencing and identity-linkages to these operations to disincentives malicious workers and outsources from acting dishonestly.

6.1 Example protocol

As discussed, PUF devices may be used for the completion of computations performed as part of edge computing applications. The idea here is that the device responsible for

computing the computational result assigned to it is also required to sign the result of the computation using a cryptographic key derived from a PUF response.

This ensures that the result of the computation performed by the worker, in this case a PUF-enabled device, is cryptographically linked to the identity of the worker device itself. This allows for edge computing to implemented with an improved level of auditability and transparency, because the signatures over the computed results may be used as evidence in the case of a dispute between an outsourcer and a worker.

The fact that the computational results are signed by the device disincentivises the worker from providing incorrect results for payment, as these incorrect results will now be signed by a key that can be linked to the device used during computation.

Moreover, the legal assurance this gives the outsourcer may allow them to provide the relevant payment for the computation more quickly, without needing to verify the correctness of the computation themselves, or needing to wait for multiple different workers to corroborate the solution given by the first worker. This is partly due to the fact that the outsourcer is able to verify the signature over the result even if they are unable to verify the result itself.

An example process for using a PUF device in an edge-computing scenario is given as follows:

1. An outsourcer advertises a job π.
2. A worker accepts the job * and computes the solution/result σ on a PUF-enabled device:
    i. The result σ is computed by the device.
    ii. A signing key P_{work} is generated based on a response of the PUF device.
2. The signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ is generated over the result.
3. The worker constructs a Bitcoin transaction containing:
    i. A representation of the result, e.g. plaintext σ or encrypted using a PUF response **.

ii. The signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ over the result.

iii. A payment output paying to the worker.

4. The worker sends the partially signed transaction to the outsourcer.
5. The outsourcer signs the transaction to complete it and broadcasts to the Bitcoin network as payment for the computation. This happens only if:
    i. The outsourcer is able to verify the signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$.
    ii. Otherwise, the outsourcer does not sign, and the transaction remains incomplete. The funds encumbered are returned to the outsourcer after a timeout period.

* 'Accepting the job' may involve communication between the outsourcer and worker. It may also involve creating a time-locked output requiring both the outsourcer and verifier.

** I.e. Enc(σ, R). R does not need to be the same as the one used to derive s = H(R)

The protocol above allows for the worker to be paid for the computation upon completion of the computation and provided they supply the outsourcer with a valid signature, which the outsourcer is able to validate immediately.

In the initial part of the process, step 2 in particular, it may be necessary for the worker and outsourcer to encumber funds to a multi-sig (or similar) output, which will require both parties to participate in signing to unlock the funds. This can be done by creating a job-acceptance transaction $TxID_{JA}$ as shown in Table A below. This transaction locks the outsourcer's funds to an output requiring both the outsourcer and worker's signatures to spend. As is standard procedure in such a scenario, they should also create a refund transaction $TxID_{Refund}$ sending the funds back to the outsourcer subject to a suitable locktime.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Job-Acceptance}}$ $\boldsymbol{(TxID_{JA})}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}, 0}$	$< Sig\ P_{out} ><$ $P_{Out} >$	x BSV	[Checksig P_{work}] [Checksig P_{out}]

Table A. An example of a job acceptance transaction that may be used to instigate an edge-computing job.

After the job π has been initialised, the worker is free to work on the job to find a solution σ, where we assume the computation is performed by a PUF-enabled device. Once the device has computed the solution it must then produce a signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ over that result.

Note that the messaged signed must include the result σ, but may also include other data in addition, such as a timestamp or nonce. Alternatively, the signed message may be part of a blockchain transaction which contains the result σ.

The key used to sign the message must be derived from the PUF device. For example, if the signature is an ECDSA signature, then the key $s_{work} = H(R)$ may be derived from some response R of the PUF to a challenge C, and the signature may be verified against the EC public key defied as $P_{work} = s_{work} \cdot G$.

The worker then generates a partially-complete transaction that includes a representation of the computed result σ, the signature over the result $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ and an output that remunerates the worker for the computational work provided. These partially complete transactions must then be sent back to the outsourcer to be complete (i.e. by them providing their own signature over the transaction) to create $TxID_{Signed-Comp}$, which can then be broadcast to the blockchain network 106.

The completed transaction $TxID_{Signed-Comp}$ spends the outsourcer's funds that were previously encumbered to the outsourcer and worker's public keys during step 2. This transaction therefore contains at least two input signatures (or a signature dependent on at least two public keys), where one is controlled by the outsourcer, and one the worker. The representation of the result and the signature over the result may be included in an output separate from the output paying the worker, such as in an OP_FALSE OP_RETURN

output. In an alternative implementation, the signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ and representation may be included in the same output as the payment. In addition, the signature $Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$ may be included as an input signature, where the representation of the result in the transaction output is part of the message signed by this input signature.

Two possible variants of $TxID_{Signed-Comp}$ are shown in Tables B and C respectively. In the first case, the signature over the result is included as an input, and the payment output to the worker is separate to an encrypted version of the result. Note that the encryption key used here may also be derived from a PUF response R and this need not be the same response used in the prior generation of P_{work}.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Signed-Comp}}$			
Input		Output	
Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{JA}, 0}$	$< Sig(P_{work}, \sigma) > < P_{work} >$ $< Sig\ P_{out} > < P_{out} >$	0 BSV	OP_O OP_RETURN <Enc(σ, R)>
		x BSV	[Checksig P_{work}]

Table B. An example of a transaction containing a computation result signed by the PUF responsible for the original computation. Here the signature is an ECDSA signature verified by the blockchain nodes. Note that P_{work} may be a different public key (also owned by the outsourcer) to the one in the input of the transaction, i.e. there would be two keys P_{work} and P'_{work} for enhanced privacy.

In the second example of a possible $TxID_{Signed-Comp}$, the explicit signature over the result is included in an output, but the output is the same that is used to pay the worker.

$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Signed-Comp}}$	
Input	Output

Outpoint	Script	Value	Script
$\boldsymbol{TxID_{Prev}}$	$< Sig\ P_{work} ><$ $P_{work} >$ $< Sig\ P_{out} >< P_{out} >$	x BSV	[Checksig P_{work}]OP_RETURN <Enc(σ, R)> <$Sig(P_{work}, \sigma)$>

Table C. An alternative example of a transaction containing a computation result signed by the PUF responsible for the original computation. Here the signature is included as additional script data.

6.2 Example scenario

An example scenario that may utilise this mechanism is a home security system comprising multiple IoT devices, where one device is a smart lock and the other devices are a multiplicity of video cameras.

The security system relies on the ability of the smart lock to make decisions about whether to lock or unlock the door based on the video recorded and analysed by the video cameras, which typically means that the lock and the video cameras need to be manufactured by the same entity such that the cameras can be integrated to provide this computation as a service to the smart lock.

In this scenario however, it may be desired to improve flexibility by allowing a smart lock from manufacturer A to be use in conjunction with the video cameras all made by another manufacturer B. In order to achieve this, manufacturer B's video cameras are configured to capture and process video, wherein the processing of the video may involve checking for sudden movements or performing facial recognition, as a service for manufacturer A' smart lock on a pay-per computation basis.

When somebody attempts to gain access to the house, the smart lock submits a job to the network of video cameras to perform facial recognition on the person at the door. Upon the first completion of the facial recognition task, the successful video camera to do so submits the result as part of a signed Bitcoin transaction to the smart lock. In response, the smart lock verifies the signature and decides whether to unlock the door based on its veracity.

By having a network of video cameras involved, this also allows for multiple video camera manufacturers B, C, D, etc., to each provide one of the cameras and compete to be the first to perform the facial recognition, wherein only the first successful completion is verified.

7. CONCLUSION

Other variants or use cases of the disclosed techniques may become apparent to the person skilled in the art once given the disclosure herein. The scope of the disclosure is not limited by the described embodiments but only by the accompanying claims.

For instance, some embodiments above have been described in terms of a bitcoin network 106, bitcoin blockchain 150 and bitcoin nodes 104. However it will be appreciated that the bitcoin blockchain is one particular example of a blockchain 150 and the above description may apply generally to any blockchain. That is, the present invention is in by no way limited to the bitcoin blockchain. More generally, any reference above to bitcoin network 106, bitcoin blockchain 150 and bitcoin nodes 104 may be replaced with reference to a blockchain network 106, blockchain 150 and blockchain node 104 respectively. The blockchain, blockchain network and/or blockchain nodes may share some or all of the described properties of the bitcoin blockchain 150, bitcoin network 106 and bitcoin nodes 104 as described above.

In preferred embodiments of the invention, the blockchain network 106 is the bitcoin network and bitcoin nodes 104 perform at least all of the described functions of creating, publishing, propagating and storing blocks 151 of the blockchain 150. It is not excluded that there may be other network entities (or network elements) that only perform one or some but not all of these functions. That is, a network entity may perform the function of propagating and/or storing blocks without creating and publishing blocks (recall that these entities are not considered nodes of the preferred bitcoin network 106).

In other embodiments of the invention, the blockchain network 106 may not be the bitcoin network. In these embodiments, it is not excluded that a node may perform at least one or some but not all of the functions of creating, publishing, propagating and storing blocks 151

of the blockchain 150. For instance, on those other blockchain networks a "node" may be used to refer to a network entity that is configured to create and publish blocks 151 but not store and/or propagate those blocks 151 to other nodes.

Even more generally, any reference to the term "bitcoin node" 104 above may be replaced with the term "network entity" or "network element", wherein such an entity/element is configured to perform some or all of the roles of creating, publishing, propagating and storing blocks. The functions of such a network entity/element may be implemented in hardware in the same way described above with reference to a blockchain node 104.

It will be appreciated that the above embodiments have been described by way of example only. More generally there may be provided a method, apparatus or program in accordance with any one or more of the following Statements.

Statement 1. A computer-implemented method of performing a computation, the method comprising, by target computer equipment of a target party, being the computer equipment which is to perform the computation: obtaining a cryptographic key derived from a response generated by PUF module comprising a physically unclonable function, PUF, the response having been generated by the PUF module based on the PUF in response to a corresponding challenge input to the PUF module, wherein key information comprising the cryptographic key or a corresponding public key is also made available to a verifying party; from an issuing party, receiving a computation request specifying the computation to be performed; in response to the computation request, performing the computation in order to generate a computation result; signing a message comprising the computation result with the cryptographic key; and making the signed message available to the verifying party by sending the signed message to be recorded on a blockchain.

Statement 2. The method of Statement 1, wherein the issuing party is the verifying party.

Statement 3. The method of Statement 1 or 2, wherein the sending of the signed message comprises: the target party formulating a template blockchain transaction comprising the signed message; and the target party sending the template transaction to the verifying

party, thereby causing the verifying party to verify the signature on the message, and in dependence thereon to complete the template transaction at least by signing with a signature of the verifying party, and forward the completed transaction to be recorded on the blockchain.

Statement 4. The method of Statement 3, wherein the message comprises at least part of the template transaction.

Statement 5. The method of Statement 3 or 4, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party for the computation once recorded on the blockchain.

Statement 6. The method of Statement 5, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party by comprising an input that points to an output of a funding transaction on the blockchain, and an output that assigns at least some funds of the issuing party from the output of the funding transaction to the target party; wherein the output of the funding transaction comprises a time-out condition that enables the funds to be transferred back to the issuing party if not assigned to the target party after a specified time-out period.

Statement 7. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the obtaining of the cryptographic key is performed, and the key information made available to the verifying party, in a set-up phase prior to the target party receiving the computation request.

Statement 8. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein said obtaining comprises: receiving the response from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF module to generate the response by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted third party on behalf of the target party, and generating of the public-private key pair being based on the received response.

Statement 9. The method of any of Statements 1 to 7, wherein said obtaining comprises: receiving the public key from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted

third party to generate the response and derive the cryptographic key pair on behalf of the target party.

Statement 10. The method of Statement 8 or 9, wherein the third party makes the key information available to the verifying party.

Statement 11. The method of any of Statements 1 to 7, wherein said obtaining comprises: the target party performing the inputting of the challenge to the PUF module to generate the response and derive the cryptographic key by the target party.

Statement 12. The method of Statement 11, wherein the target computer equipment takes the form of a self-contained target device, and one of: the PUF module is incorporated in a same housing as the target device, or the PUF module is implemented in an external peripheral connected to the target device by a cable but not a network.

Statement 13. The method of Statement 11 or 12, or any of Statement 1 to 9, wherein the method comprises the target party making the key information available to the verifying party.

Statement 14. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the making available of the key information to the verifying party comprises: sending the key information to the verifying party.

Statement 15. The method of any of Statements 1 to 13, wherein the making available of the key information to the verifying party comprises: storing the key information linked to an identity of the target party or target computer equipment, in a key information storage medium accessible to the verifying party.

Statement 16. The method of Statement 15, wherein the key information storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

Statement 17. The method of Statement 16, wherein the key information storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 18. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the cryptographic key comprises a private key of an asymmetric public-private key pair comprising the private key and a corresponding public key, the key public-private key pair being derived from said response, wherein the key information made available to the verifying party comprises the public key.

Statement 19. The method of any of Statements 1 to 17, wherein the cryptographic key comprises a key of a symmetric authentication scheme, wherein the key information made available to the verifying party also comprises said cryptographic key.

Statement 20. The method of any preceding Statement, comprising encrypting the computation result so as to require a decryption key to decrypt, wherein the computation result is made available able to the verifying party only in encrypted form, and the decryption key is made available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 21. The method of Statement 20, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the computation result before signing with the private key.

Statement 22. The method of Statement 20, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the message after signing with the private key.

Statement 23. The method of any of Statements 20 to 22, wherein the decryption key is derived from another response generated by the PUF module, or another PUF module, in response to another challenge input to the PUF module by the target party, verifying party, issuing party or a trusted third party.

Statement 24. The method of Statement 23, wherein the method comprises the target party inputting said other response to generate the other challenge, and deriving the decryption key.

Statement 25. The method of any of Statements 20 to 24, comprising the target party making the decryption key available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 26. The method of any of Statements 20 to 25, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: sending the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 27. The method of any of Statements 20 to 25, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: storing the decryption key in a decryption key storage medium accessible to the verifying and/or issuing party.

Statement 28. The method of Statement 27, wherein the decryption key storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

Statement 29. The method of Statement 27, wherein the decryption key storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 30. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the receiving of the computation request comprises accessing an electronic advertisement medium to retrieve the computation request.

Statement 31. The method of Statement 30, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is implemented in third party server equipment or computer equipment of the verifying party.

Statement 32. The method of Statement 30, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 33. The method of any preceding Statement, comprising sending an acceptance signal from the target party to the verifying party accepting the computation.

Statement 34. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the target computer equipment is one of a plurality of pieces of computer equipment involved in a distributed computing system performing distributed computing, said computation being part of the distributed computing.

Statement 35. The method of Statement 34, wherein the distributed computing is performed on a pay per computation basis, wherein the target party receives a payment for performing the computation on condition that the verifying party verifies the signature of the target party based on the key information.

Statement 36. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein message further comprises a time stamp indicating a time of performing the computation at the target computer equipment.

Statement 37. The method of any preceding Statement, wherein the PUF module comprises a PUF and a deterministic transform function, and is configured to generate the response by: inputting a base input into the PUF to generate a corresponding base output; and inputting the challenge and into the transform function in conjunction with the generated base output in order to generate the response, the transform function being a function of the challenge and the generated base output.

Statement 38. Computer equipment comprising: memory comprising one or more memory units; and processing apparatus comprising one or more processing units, wherein the memory stores code arranged to run on the processing apparatus, the code being configured so as when on the processing apparatus to perform the method of any preceding Statement.

Statement 39. A computer program embodied on a non-transitory computer-readable medium and configured so as, when run on one or more processors, to perform the method of any of Statements 1 to 37.

Statement 1A. A computer-implemented method of performing a computation, the method comprising, by target computer equipment of a target party, being the computer equipment which is to perform the computation: obtaining at least a private key of a public-private key pair derived from a response generated by PUF module comprising a physically unclonable function, PUF, the response having been generated by the PUF module based on the PUF in response to a corresponding challenge input to the PUF module, wherein the public-private key pair comprises the private key and a corresponding public key, wherein the public key is made available to a verifying party; from an issuing party, receiving a computation request specifying the computation to be performed; in response to the computation request, performing the computation in order to generate a computation result; signing a message comprising the computation result with the private key; and making the signed message available to the verifying party.

Statement 2A. The method of Statement 1A, wherein the issuing party is the verifying party.

Statement 3A. The method of Statement 1A or 2A, wherein the making available of the signed message comprise: storing the signed message in a data storage medium accessible by the verifying party.

Statement 4A. The method of Statement 3A, wherein the data storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

Statement 5A. The method of Statement 3A, wherein the data storage medium is a peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 6A. The method of Statement 5A, wherein the peer-to-peer publication medium is a blockchain.

Statement 7A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 6A, wherein the making available of the signed message to the verifying party comprises: the target party formulating a template blockchain transaction comprising the signed message; and the target party sending the template transaction to the verifying party, thereby causing the verifying party to verify the signature on the message, and in dependence thereon to complete the template transaction at least by signing with a signature of the verifying party, and forward the completed transaction to be recorded on a blockchain.

Statement 8A. The method of Statement 7A, wherein the message comprises at least part of the template transaction.

Statement 9A. The method of Statement 7A or 8A, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party for the computation once recorded on the blockchain.

Statement 10A. The method of Statement 9A, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party by comprising an input that points to an output of a funding transaction on the blockchain, and an output that assigns at least some funds of the issuing party from the output of the funding transaction to the target party; wherein the output of the funding transaction comprises a time-out condition that enables the funds to be transferred back to the issuing party if not assigned to the target party after a specified time-out period.

Statement 11A. The method of Statements 1A to 10A, wherein the obtaining of the public key is performed, and the public key made available to the verifying party, in a set-up phase prior to the target party receiving the computation request.

Statement 12A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 11A, wherein said obtaining comprises: receiving the response from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF module to generate the response by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted third party on behalf of the target party, and generating of the public-private key pair being based on the received response.

Statement 13A. The method of any of Statements 1 to 11, wherein said obtaining comprises: receiving the public key from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted third party to generate the response and derive the public-private key pair on behalf of the target party.

Statement 14A. The method of Statement 12A or 13A, wherein the third party makes the public key available to the verifying party.

Statement 15A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 12A, wherein said obtaining comprises: the target party performing the inputting of the challenge to the PUF module to generate the response and derive the public private key pair by the target party.

Statement 16A. The method of Statement 15A, wherein the target computer equipment takes the form of a self-contained target device, and one of: the PUF module is incorporated in a same housing as the target device, or the PUF module is implemented in an external peripheral connected to the target device by a cable but not a network.

Statement 17A. The method of Statement 15A or 16A, or Statement 12A, wherein the method comprises the target party making the public key available to the verifying party.

Statement 18A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 17A, wherein the making available of the public key to the verifying party comprises: sending the public key to the verifying party.

Statement 19A. The method of any of Statement 1A to 17A, wherein the making available of the public key to the verifying party comprises: storing the public key linked to identity of the target party or computer equipment, in a public key storage medium accessible to the verifying party.

Statement 20A. The method of Statement 19A, wherein the public key storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

Statement 21A. The method of Statement 20A, wherein the public key storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 22A. The method of any Statements 1A to 21A, comprising encrypting the computation result so as to require a decryption key to decrypt, wherein the computation result is made available able to the verifying party only in encrypted form, and the decryption key is made available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 23A. The method of Statement 22A, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the computation result before signing with the private key.

Statement 24A. The method of Statement 22A, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the message after signing with the private key.

Statement 25A. The method of any of Statements 22A to 24A, wherein the decryption key is derived from another response generated by the PUF module, or another PUF module, in response to another challenge input to the PUF module by the target party, verifying party, issuing party or a trusted third party.

Statement 26A. The method of Statement 25A, wherein the method comprises the target party inputting said other response to generate the other challenge, and deriving the encryption-decryption key pair.

Statement 27A. The method of any of Statements 22A to 26A, comprising the target party making the decryption key available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 28A. The method of any of Statements 22A to 27A, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: sending the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

Statement 29A. The method of any of Statements 22A to 27A, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: storing the decryption key in a decryption key storage medium accessible to the verifying and/or issuing party.

Statement 30A. The method of Statement 29A, wherein the decryption key storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

Statement 31A. The method of Statement 29A, wherein the decryption key storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 32A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 31A, wherein the receiving of the computation request comprises accessing an electronic advertisement medium to retrieve the computation request.

Statement 33A. The method of Statement 32A, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is implemented in third party server equipment or computer equipment of the verifying party.

Statement 34A. The method of Statement 32A, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

Statement 35A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 34A, comprising sending an acceptance signal from the target party to the verifying party accepting the computation.

Statement 36A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 35A, wherein the target computer equipment is one of a plurality of pieces of computer equipment involved in a distributed

computing system performing distributed computing, said computation being part of the distributed computing.

Statement 37A. The method of claim 36A, wherein the distributed computing is performed on a pay per computation basis, wherein the target party receives a payment for performing the computation on condition that the verifying party verifies the signature of the target party based on the public key.

Statement 38A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 37A, wherein message further comprises a time stamp indicating a time of performing the computation at the target computer equipment.

Statement 39A. The method of any of Statements 1A to 38A, wherein the PUF module comprises a PUF and a deterministic transform function, and is configured to generate the response by: inputting a base input into the PUF to generate a corresponding base output; and inputting the challenge and into the transform function in conjunction with the generated base output in order to generate the response, the transform function being a function of the challenge and the generated base output.

Statement 40A. Computer equipment comprising: memory comprising one or more memory units; and processing apparatus comprising one or more processing units, wherein the memory stores code arranged to run on the processing apparatus, the code being configured so as when on the processing apparatus to perform the method of any of Statements 1A to 39A.

Statement 41A. A computer program embodied on a non-transitory computer-readable medium and configured so as, when run on one or more processors, to perform the method of any of Statements 1A to 39A.

CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method of performing a computation, the method comprising, by target computer equipment of a target party, being the computer equipment which is to perform the computation:

obtaining a cryptographic key derived from a response generated by PUF module comprising a physically unclonable function, PUF, the response having been generated by the PUF module based on the PUF in response to a corresponding challenge input to the PUF module, wherein key information comprising the cryptographic key or a corresponding public key is also made available to a verifying party;

from an issuing party, receiving a computation request specifying the computation to be performed;

in response to the computation request, performing the computation in order to generate a computation result;

signing a message comprising the computation result with the cryptographic key; and

making the signed message available to the verifying party by sending the signed message to be recorded on a blockchain.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the issuing party is the verifying party.

3. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the sending of the signed message comprises:

- the target party formulating a template blockchain transaction comprising the signed message; and

- the target party sending the template transaction to the verifying party, thereby causing the verifying party to verify the signature on the message, and in dependence thereon to complete the template transaction at least by signing with a signature of the verifying party, and forward the completed transaction to be recorded on the blockchain.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the message comprises at least part of the template transaction.

5. The method of claim 3 or 4, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party for the computation once recorded on the blockchain.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the completed transaction pays the target party by comprising an input that points to an output of a funding transaction on the blockchain, and an output that assigns at least some funds of the issuing party from the output of the funding transaction to the target party; wherein the output of the funding transaction comprises a time-out condition that enables the funds to be transferred back to the issuing party if not assigned to the target party after a specified time-out period.

7. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the obtaining of the cryptographic key is performed, and the key information made available to the verifying party, in a set-up phase prior to the target party receiving the computation request.

8. The method of any preceding claim, wherein said obtaining comprises:

receiving the response from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF module to generate the response by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted third party on behalf of the target party, and generating of the public-private key pair being based on the received response.

9. The method of any of claims 1 to 7, wherein said obtaining comprises:

receiving the public key from the issuing party, verifying party or a trusted third party, the challenge having been input into the PUF by the issuing party, verifying party or trusted third party to generate the response and derive the cryptographic key pair on behalf of the target party.

10. The method of claim 8 or 9, wherein the third party makes the key information available to the verifying party.

11. The method of any of claims 1 to 7, wherein said obtaining comprises: the target party performing the inputting of the challenge to the PUF module to generate the response and derive the cryptographic key by the target party.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the target computer equipment takes the form of a self-contained target device, and one of:

- the PUF module is incorporated in a same housing as the target device, or
- the PUF module is implemented in an external peripheral connected to the target device by a cable but not a network.

13. The method of claim 11 or 12, or any of claims 1 to 9, wherein the method comprises the target party making the key information available to the verifying party.

14. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the making available of the key information to the verifying party comprises: sending the key information to the verifying party.

15. The method of any of claims 1 to 13, wherein the making available of the key information to the verifying party comprises: storing the key information linked to an identity of the target party or target computer equipment, in a key information storage medium accessible to the verifying party.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the key information storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the key information storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

18. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the cryptographic key comprises a private key of an asymmetric public-private key pair comprising the private key and a corresponding public key, the key public-private key pair being derived from said response, wherein the key information made available to the verifying party comprises the public key.

19. The method of any of claims 1 to 17, wherein the cryptographic key comprises a key of a symmetric authentication scheme, wherein the key information made available to the verifying party also comprises said cryptographic key.

20. The method of any preceding claim, comprising encrypting the computation result so as to require a decryption key to decrypt, wherein the computation result is made available able to the verifying party only in encrypted form, and the decryption key is made available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the computation result before signing with the private key.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein the encryption comprises encrypting the message after signing with the private key.

23. The method of any of claims 20 to 22, wherein the decryption key is derived from another response generated by the PUF module, or another PUF module, in response to another challenge input to the PUF module by the target party, verifying party, issuing party or a trusted third party.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the method comprises the target party inputting said other response to generate the other challenge, and deriving the decryption key.

25. The method of any of claims 20 to 24, comprising the target party making the decryption key available to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

26. The method of any of claims 20 to 25, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: sending the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party.

27. The method of any of claims 20 to 25, wherein the making available of the decryption key to the verifying party and/or issuing party comprises: storing the decryption key in a decryption key storage medium accessible to the verifying and/or issuing party.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the decryption key storage medium is implemented in third party server equipment comprising one or more server units at one or more physical sites.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein the decryption key storage medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

30. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the receiving of the computation request comprises accessing an electronic advertisement medium to retrieve the computation request.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is implemented in third party server equipment or computer equipment of the verifying party.

32. The method of claim 30, wherein the electronic advertisement medium is a blockchain or other peer-to-peer publication medium.

33. The method of any preceding claim, comprising sending an acceptance signal from the target party to the verifying party accepting the computation.

34. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the target computer equipment is one of a plurality of pieces of computer equipment involved in a distributed computing system performing distributed computing, said computation being part of the distributed computing.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the distributed computing is performed on a pay per computation basis, wherein the target party receives a payment for performing the

computation on condition that the verifying party verifies the signature of the target party based on the key information.

36. The method of any preceding claim, wherein message further comprises a time stamp indicating a time of performing the computation at the target computer equipment.

37. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the PUF module comprises a PUF and a deterministic transform function, and is configured to generate the response by:

- inputting a base input into the PUF to generate a corresponding base output; and
- inputting the challenge and into the transform function in conjunction with the generated base output in order to generate the response, the transform function being a function of the challenge and the generated base output.

38. Computer equipment comprising:

memory comprising one or more memory units; and

processing apparatus comprising one or more processing units, wherein the memory stores code arranged to run on the processing apparatus, the code being configured so as when on the processing apparatus to perform the method of any preceding claim.

39. A computer program embodied on a non-transitory computer-readable medium and configured so as, when run on one or more processors, to perform the method of any of claims 1 to 37.